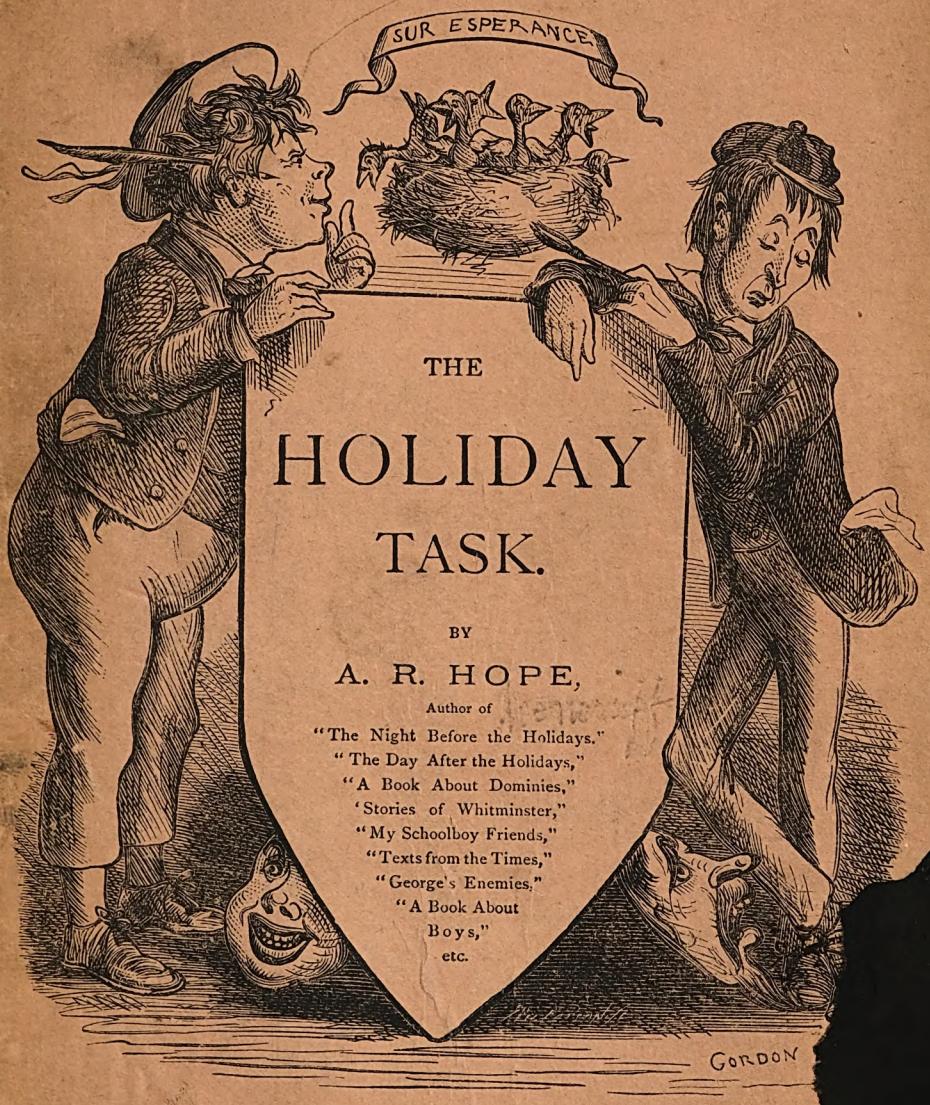

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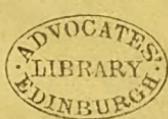
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THE HOLIDAY TASK:

*AN OCCASIONAL MAGAZINE OF CONTRIBUTIONS BY
THE PUPILS OF WHITMINSTER GRAMMAR SCHOOL
AND THEIR FRIENDS.*



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ, JUNIOR.

WILLIAM P. NIMMO.
LONDON: 14 KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND;
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. THE TELL-TALE,	5
II. THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF JACK ROBINSON,	18
III. OUR LITTLE ANCESTORS,	46
IV. SONNET TO THE MOON,	61
V. THE GHOST OF BEECHAM MANOR,	62
VI. A VISIT TO THE BANK OF ENGLAND,	77
VII. THE MIDNIGHT MYSTERY,	88
VIII. OUR SUNDAY ALONE,	97
IX. THE ONE-EYED TRAPPER,	110
X. CHANTICLEER,	113
XL DECLINED WITH THANKS,	121

INTRODUCTORY ODE TO THE MUSES.

BY THE WHOLE STAFF OF CONTRIBUTORS.

"An airy of children, little eyases."

—Hamlet.

 H sacred Nine, oh tuneful choir,
 Whatever title most rejoices,
 We hail you with a hopeful lyre,
 And three times three in treble voices.

With love sincere and scorn of gain
 We court your favour, not your dowers;
 Through no rough grove of birch or cane
 The Fates now drive us to your bowers.

All other joys we freely yield,
 Find nothing fair in other faces;
 For you we fly the cricket-field
 And turn our backs upon the *Graces*.

Rabbits and dogs we have forgot,
 For Pegasus exchanged our pony;
 The once-loved river knows us not,
 To all the Nymphs our hearts are stony.

This task has filled our holidays,
 This garland gathered on Parnassus—
 Accept it; if it earn no praise,
 At least give marks enough to pass us.

THE HOLIDAY TASK.

I.

THE TELL-TALE.

By PATRICK O'CALLAGHAN.

I AM an Irish boy. People say I don't need to tell them that, but I am not a bit ashamed of it. Before I came to this school I was at a Roman Catholic college near Dublin, where we were looked after pretty strictly, I can tell you. We had to turn out of bed at six o'clock every morning, and were kept with our noses to the grindstone the best part of the day ; and if we didn't work or were caught at any tricks, we were sent to the Dean's room—"the den of lions," we called it—and got talked to in a way there was no mistaking. I managed to get into scrapes a great deal too often, and unluckily I wasn't so good at getting out of them. The Dean kept a little gutta-percha cane, which tasted not nearly so nice as strawberries and cream. Now I will begin my story.

One day we had all been playing hare-and-hounds, and had had a good run over the country. At night we were as stiff and tired as cab horses, and when we

A

went to bed, the boys in our dormitory began grumbling as usual that we had to get up so soon these cold mornings, and to wish we could find out some way of having an extra half-hour in bed.

“Come, O’Callaghan,” they said to me, “you are always bragging that you wouldn’t mind climbing up to that bell. Why don’t you do it, and stop its horrid tongue for once?”

“Who says I won’t do it?” cried I, and the other fellows all vowed I was a regular good fellow, and promised not to breathe a word, if there should be a row about it next day. There was only one who said anything against it, and he was a “cleric” called Sullivan, that none of us liked. There was always a kind of opposition between the lay boys and the clerics—that is, the fellows who were intended for priests. So we didn’t mind him, and told him we would tear him into very little bits if he didn’t keep the secret.

The bell hung in a little turret above the dormitories, and there were a water-spout and a lightning conductor running down from it to the ground. I had often thought I could climb up there, and now that the other boys were daring me to do it, I determined to have a try. It was a fine moonlight night, and there was not

much chance of any one seeing me, as the wall faced to the playground, and beyond that was a little hill and an old graveyard, which nobody ever thought of going near at so late an hour.

So, after the prefect had gone round to see that all was right, I slipped on my jacket and trousers, and squeezed myself out of the window. I caught hold of the lightning conductor with my hands ; then I drew myself out and got the spout between my knees, and worked my way up, resting my feet on the holdfasts of the spout. It was all quite easy, and I wondered I had never tried it before ; but ugh ! it was cold enough to freeze the handle off a pump.

Well, I soon reached the turret and got a grip of that beast of a bell. I couldn't help shaking it a little, and it gave a small jangle, which rather frightened me, for I thought it might rouse up the house. But nobody seemed to have heard, and I went to work more cautiously, getting up beside it and catching tight hold of the tongue this time. I had hoped to be able to unhook it, but I found it was fastened in at the top. So I tied it up with a piece of string, and to make quite sure, I wound my handkerchief round the ball of the clapper, like a wad. I tried it, and felt certain there wasn't a rattle to be got out of it now ; it was as

quiet as a greedy boy at pudding time. I should like to have cut my name on the bell, but I was afraid that would end in my being found out. Besides, by this time my hands were so cold that I could scarcely hold on to the lightning rod. I slipped down as quick as I could, and got safely into the dormitory, where all the fellows were anxious to know how I had succeeded. Didn't they praise me up to the skies when they heard what I had done, and didn't we chuckle at the notion of the old bell not being able to ring us up next morning! The best of the joke was that Mat Riley, the lay brother who rang the bell, had been as deaf as a post for the last two years, so he would not be able to tell that the bell had turned dumb, and we felt sure of having at least half-an-hour longer in bed before the trick was found out.

But we, in our room, didn't get much good out of it in this way, for by six we were wide-awake and all peeping out of the window to see the fun of Mat Riley ringing the bell. Punctual to a moment the old fellow stumped out, unlocked the box in which the rope was kept, and proceeded to toll away. No sound came from the bell tower but a slight creaking; old Mat, however, was too deaf to see any difference, and after the usual number of pulls, took his broom and

trotted off to sweep out the chapel, while we roared with laughter above his head, knowing that he couldn't hear us. Presently he came back and gravely rang the Angelus ; after which he locked up the box, and went off, quite satisfied that he had done his duty like a man.

Not a soul was stirring in the dormitories. The clock above the chapel went on as usual ; but the court was still and empty. And at half-past six when Mat began to ring for prayers at the chapel, which had a little tinkling bell of its own, instead of a crowd of boys hurrying along the long corridor not to be too late, nobody appeared but Mr Lewis, one of the prefects, who couldn't make out what was the meaning of it all, and was walking up and down before the chapel door like a kangaroo in its cage.

Presently we saw Mr Lewis and Mat come together into the court, where they stood talking, or rather making signs to each other. Mr Lewis seemed to be asking why he had not rung the bell ; and Mat pointed to it, and declared that it had been rung as usual. Then they came up to the box, which Mat unlocked and began to tug away like a Trojan without effect, and Mr Lewis stared and looked up, so that we, peeping out of our window, had to duck down as suddenly as

water hens when a gun is fired, hoping he had not seen us.

We had been very much amused at all this, but now it was necessary to jump into bed in a hurry, for we knew that the prefect would be up through the dormitories before long. And sure enough he came along in a minute or two, and found us all trying to look as sleepy and innocent as so many babies that had just been tucked up in bed, though, for the life of me, I could scarcely help laughing in his face.

“Get up at once!” he said.

“Has the bell rung yet, Mr Lewis?” one of the boys asked, and I crammed my face into the pillow, and kicked out hard beneath the bed-clothes to keep myself quiet.

“You get up and make haste to come to chapel,” was all he said ; and there was no disobeying this.

So up we got and down we went, and found all the fellows buttoning up on the stairs as they hurried to the chapel, and asking one another why the bell hadn’t rung. And as we passed into the chapel, we saw Mr Lewis and Mat Riley going off to the play-ground with a long ladder. I could easily guess what they were after, and I reminded the fellows in our dormitory that they were to be sure not to tell any-

body what I had done. Then I told it to half-a-dozen at least, for it was too good a joke to keep to myself.

When mass was over, it was so late that instead of going to the study-hall, we were marched straight to the refectory for breakfast. Nothing was talked about among the fellows except the trick played to the bell; and the masters, with long faces like the mutes at a funeral, came and stood together at one end of the room, speaking to one another, and no doubt planning how to find out who had done it. The fun began to look serious, and I began to think that I had not done such a very clever thing after all, especially when the very boys who had voted me such a jolly fellow the night before, now were the first to turn against me, and to say that the only good of my fine prank would be to get the whole school into a scrape. And most of the fellows knew all about it by this time, so it wasn't likely to be kept a secret much longer. Ned Magee, who was in the rostrum that morning, reading out one of the lives of the saints, looked up every minute or so when the prefect's back was turned, to give me a wink, as if to say "You're in for it, my boy!" And everybody kept staring at me, and whispering enough to give the masters a hint if they had wanted

one. So I declared to myself that the next time they wanted somebody to tie up the bell, they could go and do it themselves, and see how they liked it.

Of course I wasn't going to tell a lie about it, if they accused me, and I more than half expected that I should be found out in the end ; but I must say I was a bit surprised when Mr Lewis walked up to me just as breakfast was over, and told me I was to go to the Dean's room at twelve o'clock.

So they had hit on me, first shot, without asking a question ! I was fairly puzzled, I confess, and when we got out into the playground, about a dozen of us set to work wondering if it was really found out, and how it had been found out. I thought the masters must have holes to listen outside of the dormitories and hear all we said. Doors are not so deaf when there's an ear behind them.

"Not a bit of it," said Magee. "I'll tell you how they have found you out. It's that fellow Sullivan, the greatest sneak we have in the college. Don't you remember he was the only one against it, last night ? And this morning I saw him go snivelling up to Lewis, and they were talking for ever so long in the court, after chapel."

"But how do you know what he was talking about?"

said Gordon, a stupid Scotchman, who was always asking questions.

"What else could he have been talking about?" replied Magee; and as Gordon couldn't say, we made sure that Sullivan had played the sneak.

"All right, Mr Sullivan," said I to myself, not feeling very well pleased. Then I got hold of Owen Wyndham, my "daw," that is, my particular friend, and I told him: "Owny, my boy, you come and wait for me outside of the den, and as soon as you hear him *at it*, you understand, just you run out and get hold of Sullivan and let him have a fair share of what's going."

"All right," says Owny. "I'll take good care that Sullivan has something that will teach him to hold his tongue another time, and keep his breath to howl with." And he began plaiting a strap scientifically.

It was some comfort to think that I should be revenged on Sullivan, if I got into trouble through him; but all the same I wished twelve o'clock would come and be over. The lickings at that place were no joke, I can tell you, and I knew I should come in for the worst kind of one, if they had found me out. There were two of the masters who did the execution business—the Dean and the Sub-dean. Sometimes it

was Father Costello, who was such a kind, tender-hearted old man, that I really believe he couldn't bear having to punish us, and who used to talk to us over it in such a way that we felt sorry we had to be punished. Then sometimes it was the Sub-dean, Father O'Brien, who was a brute and rather liked the job, especially when he got a fellow into his clutches who had perhaps been hacking him at football, the day before. But now I hoped I should have Father O'Brien, for I felt angry and bothered about the whole affair, and I knew I could stand his style better than the old Dean's, who could talk in such a way as to make any fellow cry if he didn't take care.

At twelve o'clock I went into the den of lions, and Owen waited outside, to see what would become of me. It was Father Costello after all, and he didn't waste any time about it.

"O'Callaghan, was it you who tied up the bell?"
So I told him it was, and made ready.

Then he asked me how I had done it, and explained to me how silly and dangerous a trick it was, and how little good anybody had got out of it; till I felt I had made a fool of myself, and thought I would rather take the licking than vex him so much. But he didn't keep me long waiting, and you may guess

what happened next. I didn't say a word, but I don't think I could have helped singing out, if I hadn't been thinking all the while of what Master Sullivan was going to get for himself in a minute or two. Besides, I had a little bit of india-rubber between my teeth, which I had borrowed from Magee, in case it had been O'Brien. And when it was over, I said :

"Father Costello, I'll promise you never to go up the lightning conductor again, if you will tell me one thing."

"What is it?"

"Who told you?"

"You mean you would like to know who betrayed you, when I suppose you thought you were safe. Well, O'Callaghan, it was—yourself."

I nearly swallowed the india-rubber. Father Costello picked up from the table the handkerchief with which I had tied up the bell, and I thought I saw half a laugh in the corner of his eye.

"Isn't this yours?" he said, showing me my name in the corner, as plain as could be.

"I declare I never thought of that!" says I.

"You are a real Irishman," says he, and gave a little tap with his knuckles on my thick stupid head;

and for the life of me I couldn't help laughing, though about a minute before I had been as near the other thing as a fellow can decently be without making a fool of himself. But I had been at the bottom of quite enough mischief already that morning; so as soon as I could get away from the den, I ran off to the playground, to see what they were doing with Sullivan. And sure enough, there he was being dragged along to execution by a lot of the lay boys, and some of the clerics were looking on, like a flock of frightened sheep, and didn't dare to try a rescue.

"I tell you it wasn't me! I know nothing about it—I never said a word—leave me alone," he was crying, and struggling to get off.

"We don't believe a word you say, you sneak," said Owny Wyndham. "We are going to teach you not to tell tales again in a hurry. You can go and tell that I gave you—"

"There, that's enough," said I, shoving in among them, and setting Sullivan free, who made off as fast as he could, without waiting to hear another word.

"Why? Wasn't it Sullivan? Have you found out who told? Who was it? and we'll thrash him within an inch of his life," they all cried; for they were kind-hearted, friendly fellows.

"No, you won't. Never mind who it was," said I; for I didn't care to have it known what an ass I had been.

But it was too good a joke, and I couldn't help telling them. So the whole school had not only an extra half-hour in bed, but a capital laugh out of me, and I got nothing for my share of the bargain but what I would just as soon have made a present of to anybody that liked it. And the story tickled all the fellows so much that, for a long time afterwards, whenever any of them was caught in a bit of mischief, they used to ask, "*Was his name on the handkerchief?*"



II.

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES

OF

JACK ROBINSON AND HIS FRIEND
ALGERNON DE COURCY

IN THE INTERIOR OF AFRICA.

(Continued from "The Day Before the Holidays.")

THOSE of my readers who are acquainted with the former part of my adventures will remember that when I broke off the story, we were left in a most perilous situation—viz., sitting by the side of a frozen lake, with our hands bound behind us, while a huge lion was regarding us with fierce and hungry eyes. But I need scarcely say that before anything unpleasant took place, a sudden thaw arrived, the ice broke up with a noise like thunder, and the lion sank to the bottom. We, however, managed to scramble on shore, and after gnawing off one another's bonds, struck into the interior as fast as we could, keeping a good look-out, lest we should again be surprised by wild beasts or uncivilised natives.

We wandered all day over a flat and barren wilderness, without seeing any living thing, except a flock of pelicans, which flew away at our approach. We

had nothing to eat but a little soup, which we made by boiling our boots in turtle-shells. When the sun set, we were hungry and footsore, and knew not where we might safely pass the night. Then by the glimmering light of the new moon we perceived a small hillock, towards which we made, that from the top of it we might survey the surrounding country.

With some difficulty we climbed this little hill, the sides of which were steep and slippery, and covered with what we took in the darkness for short grass. On reaching the top we sat down astride of the narrow ridge, and were wiping the perspiration from our brows, when, to our horror, we felt as if the ground was rising up beneath us. Our first thought was that this must be an earthquake; but soon we perceived that what we had taken for a hill was in reality the hump of an enormous camel, that had been lying asleep and was now rising to its feet. Terrified at this discovery, we would have slipped off behind, but as the darkness prevented us from seeing how far we should have to fall, we concluded to make the best of our present position, and held on as tight as we could, while the alarmed and bewildered camel dashed off with us at a tremendous pace across the dark and silent plains of the desert.

It was rough riding, as you may imagine, and Algy and I were so much shaken that we felt the effects for days afterwards. But as soon as we had recovered from our first surprise and confusion, we briefly took counsel together as to what was best to be done ; then picking out a bright star, which we fancied must be the North Star, did all we could, by kicking and poking the camel, to keep his head turned towards it, and steer him in the direction of Europe.

All night long we travelled thus, and when daylight came, we found ourselves nearing a desolate oasis, in the midst of a vast sandy desert, stretching on all sides as far as the eye could reach. At the sight of this, our lofty steed redoubled his exertions ; but just as he arrived at the edge of the oasis, the poor camel suddenly dropped down dead from exhaustion, throwing us off on the glowing sand with such violence that I was half buried in it. Algy was still more unfortunate : he alighted on his head, and in this way was driven into the ground to the depth of nearly two feet ; so that when I picked myself up, all I could see of him was his legs, kicking helplessly in the air. As soon as I had shaken myself, and brushed my clothes, I ran up, and catching hold of his feet, managed, after three tremendous tugs, to pull him safely out, just in

time to prevent him from being choked by the sand, which stopped up his mouth and nostrils to such an extent that it was ten minutes before he was able to speak, and for ten more he had such a fit of coughing and sneezing that if I had not used great firmness and skill in patting him on the back, I believe he would have burst himself in pieces.

“Ugh! That’s what I call going headstrong into trouble,” were his first articulate words on recovering.

After this awkward incident, we proceeded to explore the interior of the oasis. To our great delight we found it fringed by low, prickly bushes heavily laden with ripe raisins, almonds, and other fruits, which soon refreshed our parched palates, and put new vigour into our wearied limbs. We pushed on, and were lost in admiration at the new beauties which displayed themselves at every step. The oasis was thickly carpeted with flowers of every hue; above our heads an agreeable shade was afforded by various kinds of trees, chiefly palms, growing in large pots firmly fixed in the ground, and the branches were all alive with parrots, and other beautiful birds, that filled the air with their exquisite warblings. There was no trace of savages or of wild beasts, and we thought we had never seen such a delightful spot

in the whole course of our wanderings. So, as our clothes were in rags, as we had no means of carrying a sufficient supply of provisions for a journey over the barren desert, and as we had not the slightest notion which way to turn our steps, we resolved to go no farther, but to take up our abode here and wait till some European settlers should arrive to rescue us. And as we understood from all the stories we had read that this was not likely to happen for some years, we at once set about making preparations for a lengthened stay. The green boughs of the oasis, as Algy remarked with his usual love of weak puns, would make a pleasant (h)arbour for us after so many storms and sufferings; but this joke was really so *exaspirating*, that I begged him not to repeat it, or I would at once request him to leave the colony.

The first thing to do was to dig a well. This we accomplished by means of the shell of one of the turtles which abounded throughout the oasis, and made the night so musical with their soft cooings, that for some time we were not able to sleep in peace. Algy laboured hard for three hours at this task, which became easier as the perspiration flowed off him in streams, moistening the ground, and making it softer to work. In the meanwhile I stood by encouraging

and superintending him till we came to a plentiful supply of clear water about two feet beneath the surface. Beside this well, we then marked out a spot for our hut, the materials for which were easily obtained. A great part of the soil consisted of soft clay ; this we made into bricks, mixing it with grass, and baking them in the sun. (Algy proposed to call our settlement *Brixton*—the idiot !) When they were ready, we cemented them with a strong solution of gum arabic from the gum trees which grew in great numbers all around. The roof was thatched in with reeds and palm boughs, and when finished the erection had really a handsome and comfortable appearance. In our moments of leisure we wove together a matting of cocoa-nut fibres for the floor ; and by the help of my invaluable knife I contrived to make a few rough articles of furniture. As soon as the house was ready to receive us, we planted a tall pole in the ground, and hoisting the remains of my flannel shirt by way of flag, formally took possession of the territory.

We were at no loss for new clothes. The skin of the dead camel supplied us with complete suits, which we sewed together by means of thorns and cocoa-nut fibres. We even made strong and comfort-

able shoes out of the bark of a kind of melon tree. This bark was soft and supple as leather, though the fruit was sour and unwholesome, which gave Algy occasion to say that its bark was better than its bite. Under-garments were supplied in plenty by the luxuriant foliage of the oasis; and, indeed, so warm and equable was the climate, that, except on Sundays, we seldom wore anything but a single garment of this kind, which was the softest and pleasantest covering I ever had next my skin. I should like to be able to show you a set of six palm-leaf night-shirts that Algy made for me, under my directions. Of course they could only be put on once, and washing was out of the question, but that was of no consequence when materials were so plentiful, and we had so much time on our hands.

For food we were still better off. Fruit of all kinds, especially a sort like French prunes, was to be had for the gathering, and, such is the fertility of this country, was in season all the year round. The celebrated bread-fruit tree grows here to a great size, and affords various kinds of nourishment. The full grown fruit is somewhat coarse and indigestible, and is of the size of a quartern loaf; but on the highest branches you may gather tempting little bunches that

might be taken for French rolls, and the young shoots are so delicate that when cut in two and soaked with palm oil they taste exactly like muffins. Not that we were without butter, for by shaking the cocoa-nuts for six or seven hours, the milk could easily be curdled, though owing to the laziness of poor Algy, whose duty it was to work the churn, we were often without this almost indispensable article. We even had tea or something very like it; for my knowledge of botany enabled me to recognise a plant of this species, the leaves of which when dried and infused in a shell of hot water, produced a beverage reminding us in taste and colour of a mixture of highly flavoured Pekoe and mild table beer. Sugar we soon learned to do without. At first, too, we had to deny ourselves the use of flesh meat, unless when we could catch a turtle or a porcupine; but soon we provided ourselves with cane bows and arrows tipped with sharpened porcupine quills, and thus were able to shoot more parrots than we could eat. A little practice made us very expert marksmen, and we thought it just as well to thin down the parrots, which had begun to annoy us very much by their talent for imitating. We had not been a week in the oasis before they learned to repeat our names, and were screaming "Jack!" and

“Algy!” all day long, so that at first we used to rush about in search of each other, fancying that something serious had happened. We soon got accustomed to this, however, and in our lonely situation, even came to find considerable amusement in the discourse of our feathered friends, some of the most intelligent of whom we taught to keep up a conversation on the weather, and were thus never without society. Their flesh was tender and sweet, but naturally we grew rather tired of it, and were not sorry when one day we were able to surprise a wild pig with a litter of young ones. I will not make my narrative ridiculous by repeating the joke which Algy made on this improvement on our diet; enough to say that it was something about “*for pork you pine.*” The old sow, in struggling to escape, was, from fright or from fat, scarcely able to use her eyes, so she ran her head in between two trees, which held her fast as in a vice till we came up and despatched her. We carried home the carcase, and lived upon it so long as it was fresh; the heat of the weather and the violent exertion the animal had used, made very little cooking necessary. The rest we dried in the smoke of a fire, and hung up from the roof of our hut, in case of a hard winter. Two or three of the young

ones which we had caught, we made a sty for, and soon succeeded in taming, so that we had hopes of raising a large stock of these useful animals. Finding that they were exceedingly fond of acorns, which grew here and there in the low underwood of the oasis, we collected a quantity of the seed, and having roughly ploughed up a little plot of ground with a sharp stake, sowed it with this vegetable, and in a month or two had the satisfaction of reaping a most abundant crop. You may think it strange, but it is a fact, that we also were occasionally visited by shoals of flying fish, some of which we were able to catch in nets, as they rested for a little on the lower branches, before passing on to another oasis. When fried, they resembled smelts.

So you see our life was tolerably comfortable, and our colony might now be considered to be in a most flourishing condition, when its progress was suddenly checked by a serious dispute between Algy and myself, arising from a turbulent and ambitious disposition which I had never suspected in this foolish boy, and which gave me all the more pain when I discovered it. My study of history had taught me that the foundations of no state are sound till law and order be firmly established by institutions suitable to

the character of the community. I felt then that it would be highly selfish on my part to delay conferring a constitution upon the infant colony. So I summoned Algy into council upon the state of affairs, and addressing him at some length, pointed out to him that every body of men must have a government, that a despotic form of government was best suited to a small and rising community like ours, and that the success of the government would mainly depend on the cheerfulness and fidelity with which it was recognised by its subjects. Having thus proved my point, I brought forward the case of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, as an example of the kind of social arrangements which we had best take for our model. Accordingly I invited Algy to do me homage by placing his neck under my foot ; to invest me with the tail of the dead camel to be worn on all public occasions as a sign of my authority, and to swear obedience to the code of laws which I was about to draw up for his observance. I assured him that while I should not be forgetful of my duty to punish him for disobedience, if this should be necessary, he might confidently rely on my favour and protection, so long as he conducted himself as a peaceable and industrious subject. The taxes would be light ; he would

be eligible for all offices, and liable to be called upon to serve as an army, in case of need. By way of recognising the institution of an established church, I also proposed to make a collection from him every Sunday morning, till some missionary should arrive at the oasis to conduct a regular service.

To these moderate proposals Algy returned a most insolent and senseless reply. He admitted the necessity for a system of law and government; so far my arguments were unanswerable. But he laid down the revolutionary and un-English doctrine that the ruler should be elected by a majority of votes. After a hot debate, however, he declared he had no objection to the Robinson Crusoe form of government, and proposed as a compromise that we should draw lots which was to be Friday and which Robinson Crusoe. It was in vain that I defied him to produce any precedent; I found him utterly deaf to reason, and openly threatening to raise an insurrection. Of course I should now have been justified in restoring order by force; but in the circumstances of our exile in a foreign land, my tender-heartedness would not permit me to send my poor misguided friend to execution. I contented myself with banishing him

from the community during my pleasure ; and he at once seceded to the other side of the oasis, where he built himself a wretched mud hut, and spent his time in bemoaning that rashness and want of principle, the terrible consequences of which he now perceived, when too late. Every community wants a principal, as he himself said when he came to his senses.

Thus we lived apart for some time, when a common danger once more united us. In one of my rambles through the oasis, I came upon an object which convinced me that the spot was not unknown to our fellow-men. It was an old white hat, which, by its battered and crushed appearance, told of some scene of violence. I at once carried it to Algy, whom I found in a very desponding mood, as a wild pig had just grubbed up a great part of his newly-erected house. When he saw this proof of the peril we were in, he repented sincerely of the rashness which had led us to separate, and besought me to receive him once more under my protection. A compromise was made. I consented to the establishment of a republican form of government, and he agreed to elect me president during our stay in the country.

The very next day I had sent him out to shoot a

parrot for my dinner, when presently he came running back to tell me that the enemy were approaching the edge of the oasis. We hastily climbed the tallest tree we could find, and saw moving over the desert a yellow caravan, drawn by two horses, driven by a black boy. A loud chorus of barbarous yells, issuing from within the caravan, showed that it was full of savages. And when they came near, the gaudily painted vehicle suddenly stopped, and from behind swarmed forth about a dozen black figures, partly clothed in cast-off European garments of every fashion, fantastically adorned with white fringes round their necks and wrists, having enormous shocks of curly black hair, and carrying in their hands strange musical instruments of various kinds, which they seemed to use for stirring themselves up to fury.

You may imagine how annoyed Algy and I were at the sight of these new arrivals, who were clearly savages of the most desperate character. Our disgust was still greater when we perceived that, rolling their eyes wildly, joining in a fierce chorus, and brandishing their uncouth instruments, they rushed forward to explore the oasis. In two minutes they had discovered our settlement, had broken down our fences,

had set to flight our terrified herd of pigs, and were eagerly engaged in pillaging our house. At this spectacle I could not refrain from uttering a cry; whereupon one of the wretches looked up, saw us, and sang something to his companions, who at once came dancing round our tree, and screaming out unearthly howls, till Algy and I were obliged to stop our ears. But when they began to shake the tree, we knew that resistance was useless, and, coming down, made signs that we surrendered.

We expected to be murdered on the spot, but I am bound to say that the savages did not offer us any ill-usage. They only surrounded us, examining us curiously, and making signs that we should give them money. In reply, we tried to let them understand that we had nothing of the sort, but I presented them with my knife, which I luckily had about me. They appeared to be satisfied with this, and motioned us to sit down on the ground; then they took their places before us in a semicircle, and one of them, who seemed to be the chief, addressed us at some length, accompanying himself on a rude instrument like an enormous guitar, and stopping after every line, while the rest of the tribe joined in a deafening chorus. So far as we could make out, he repeated his remarks

over and over again, and they sounded something like this—

Golly wolly, pumkins, yaw, yaw, yaw.

Chorus.—Yaw, yaw, yaw!

Doodah, doodah, tum, tum, tum.

Chorus.—Tum, tum, tum!

As each verse was finished, the whole band seized their instruments, and began to bang and clatter with all their might, some rolling themselves on the ground and beating themselves about the head in their excitement. Algy and I looked on with mingled horror and alarm. At last, when they had all become hoarse and exhausted, and paused to take breath, it suddenly flashed across the minds of both of us at the same moment that we had fallen into the hands of the Original Christy Minstrels.

Scarcely had we communicated this suspicion to each other, than we were amazed to find ourselves addressed in our own language, by one of the band, who spoke with a strong Irish accent. He informed us that we were correct; that our captors indeed belonged to this well known tribe, and that he himself had only picked up a slight knowledge of our language from natives who lived on the coast, and

were under British protection. He then said or sang a few words in the native tongue to the chief, a tall man of singularly ferocious looks, who was pompously decked out with gold ornaments and frills of dirty white linen, besides bearing in his hand the bones of some animal, as a sign of authority.

A consultation now took place among the band, at the end of which they busied themselves in bringing together logs and branches, with which in a wonderfully short time they had erected a platform or scaffold raised about two feet above the ground. We made sure this was for our execution, and I earnestly begged Algy to relieve his conscience by apologising to me for all the trouble and anxiety he had caused me. But when everything was ready, and the savages had taken their seats in a semicircle in front of the scaffold, we were placed in the middle, and informed that a riddle was about to be put to us, and that if we answered it correctly, we should both be allowed to go free, according to the custom of the tribe. At this Algy brightened up, for he thought himself such a good hand at jokes, that they could not puzzle him in this way.

The riddle was then interpreted to us as follows : *Why is a tree like an elephant ?* I declined even to

attempt a reply, my dignity forbidding me to engage in these foolish contests of wit, whatever might be the penalty ; but poor Algy cudgelled his brains, and made several guesses, none of which was right. He offered to tell them why the wick of a candle is like a town in the middle of Greece ; what a seventy-four gun ship weighs just before she leaves the harbour ; why an African king carries an umbrella while reigning ; but these proposals were scornfully rejected, and finally he had to give it up. Then the savages performed another grand national anthem, each of them, so far as we could make out, playing a different tune with all his might ; and at the end of this, our sentence was announced to us. We were to be adopted into the tribe, and carried along to perform menial duties for the rest, first being dyed black, as it is against their laws to keep company with white men. This was bad enough ; but from the way in which they grinned and showed all their teeth at us, we guessed only too plainly that they would eat us as soon as we were fat enough. With the prospect of this horrible fate before us, we had no other choice but to submit.

The preparations which were at once made for our reception into the band we watched, first with

curiosity, then with alarm, and finally, as the purpose of them became more clearly apparent to us, with the utmost horror. A huge fire of palm branches was lit ; a large caldron being brought out of the caravan, was filled with water, set on to boil, and a bottle of dark sticky stuff was poured into it, and some handfuls of a black powder were added. Bubbles of black froth soon began to rise above the top of the caldron, and we were given to understand that we were both to be dyed from head to foot in this filthy compound.

It was in vain to struggle, to protest, to implore. It was in vain that I, in what Algy with ill-timed wit, called my *dyeing* speech, threatened to appeal to the nearest British consul, to write to the newspapers, to sell my skin only at the price of the last drop of my blood. In vain to think of resistance. The caldron was taken off the fire ; we were seized, stripped, and plunged, first one and next the other, into the still simmering liquid, then, after being ducked once or twice, were fished out and laid on the grass to dry, the whole tribe, in the meanwhile, dancing round about, and shrieking out one of their fiendish melodies. The pain was excruciating, and Algy's cries might have moved the hearts of any respectable savage. For myself, I did not utter a

groan, but concentrated my pent-up feelings upon plans of revenge. For some minutes I dared not open my eyes, partly from dread of seeing what had happened to me, and partly for fear of being blinded by a drop of the scalding liquor. But when I did take courage to look, I found that we had both been turned, not indeed jet black, but a dark grey colour, only a shade less repulsive. This we were told, was the first coat, which might be washed off; two more would be added at intervals of twenty-four hours, and then we should find ourselves indelibly and irrevocably black. Before the third operation, our skin was to be punctured all over with sharp thorns. But we hoped to escape, as Algy said, before our troubles came to such a point.

When this ceremony was finished, the chief took up his banjo, and accompanied himself in a long speech to his followers, the purport of which seemed to be that it was now time for dinner. The tribe thereupon dispersed in various directions. Some tethered the horses to feed at the edge of the oasis; others drew up the caravan among the trees; one brought forth a set of barbarous cooking utensils and an armful of cocoa-nut shell bowls, while two or three more went out to hunt, and soon succeeded in knocking one of

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our poor pigs on the head with an enormous trumpet, which, in the hands of these powerful savages, served as a most formidable weapon. Having hastily cut it up, they no less hastily fried the pieces, and after a short performance on all the instruments, flew upon the half-cooked flesh with a greediness disgusting to witness. They offered us some of the fattest slices, which we dared not refuse; though we not only disliked fat at all times, but now were in no mood for eating, especially when we suspected that we were being fattened merely for the convenience of these cannibals. However, I whispered to Algy that we must pretend to be cheerful and contented with our lot, if we wished to deceive them and escape from their clutches. So we made a shift to swallow a few morsels.

I already had conceived a daring and skilful plan by which we might not only escape, but involve the whole band of our cruel captors in a destruction which would teach them to be more humane for the future. The powder used in the process of dyeing us, which we had at first supposed to be the ashes of burned cork, had been taken out of a keg that they had brought from the caravan and left open on the ground near us. I now observed that this keg was marked

in white letters "GUNPOWDER," and from the careless way in which it had been put near the fire, I conjectured that the savages were wholly ignorant of the true nature of its contents. My resolution was taken at once.

As soon as the tribe had finished their meal by eating up all the pig, I rose and addressed them through the interpreter, informing them that I was a great magician in my own country, and offering to give them a specimen of my skill. At first they received this proposal with scornful yells of laughter, but their scorn was soon changed to admiration, when I proceeded to balance a pole on the top of my nose, to put a pebble in my mouth and take it out of my ear, to produce from an empty hat a quantity of leaves that I had previously hidden in my sleeves, and, in fact, to perform a few simple juggling tricks which filled the minds of these illiterate savages with awe. Finally I seized a handful of powder from the keg, and uttering a piercing war-whoop, flung it on the fire, where to my delight, and to their terror, it exploded with a flash and a bang, and scorched off half of the woolly hair of the chief, who had the seat of honour nearest the fire.

Their alarm was so great that they wished to hurry

away from the spot, dragging us with them. But I raised my voice above the din, endeavouring to calm their fears, and as they had now conceived a very high opinion of my sagacity, they listened to me with the utmost respect. I informed them that the pig they had killed was nothing more nor less than a powerful evil spirit, which had now taken up its abode in the keg of gunpowder and was determined to be revenged on them. But as I understood how to deal with such things, I would burn out the evil spirit, so that it should not have the power to trouble them. To this they eagerly agreed, begging me to lose no time, and promising to obey my directions implicitly.

It was now getting dark, but that was all the more favourable for my project. I ordered the savages to replenish the fire; then with a burning brand, I scorched the grass in a circle round about it, outside of which I directed them to retire, and informed them that the consequences would be fearful if they came near us while my incantations were going on. In the meanwhile Algy had been carefully covering up the keg, which he placed in the circle, pretending to be very much afraid of it, or rather it was no pretence, for Algy was afraid it would explode every moment. Poor boy, a terrible fate would have awaited him, if he

had not had a companion with such a cool head, and such firm nerves.

Algry and I now danced a polka round the circle, whistling the air, and calling forth murmurs of applause from the astonished savages. We then advanced to the keg, and standing over it, chanted the following lines :

Many nouns in *is* we find,
To the mascula assigned :
Amnis, axis, caulis, collis,
Clunis, crinis, fascis, follis,
Fustis, ignis, orbis, ensis,
Panis, piscis, postis, mensis,
Torris, unquis, and canalis,
Vectis, vermis, and natalis.

The whole tribe were now so appalled and excited that I saw we should have no difficulty in getting away. I accordingly bid them raise a chorus, and dance as furiously as they could round the circle, and not to stop for a moment till they saw the evil spirit lying dead in their midst. They obeyed with a will, and as soon as they were fairly set a-going, we heaved the keg on the fire, joined the dancers for a minute or two, then quietly slipped off and made for the edge of the oasis, without our absence being observed in the darkness and confusion.

Not a moment was to be lost. We caught the two

horses of the caravan, leaped on their backs, and urged them madly from the perilous scene. And as we galloped out into the boundless desert, we turned our heads, and through the trees caught a glimpse of the savages still whirling in a weird circle round the glowing fire ; and with their fearful chorus still ringing in our ears, we shuddered to think of the hideous danger from which we had just escaped.

Suddenly there was a roar that filled all the palm grove with horror. The light of the huge bonfire had betrayed us—we were seen—we should be pursued ! On ! on ! we exclaimed breathlessly to each other, and spurred our foaming steeds with the still smouldering brands which we had snatched from the fire, to defend ourselves in case of need. But the shout had scarcely reached our ears, before it was drowned in an explosion that made the desert shake for miles around, and before the echoes had died away, the torn and blackened fragments of the oasis, hurled in every direction, were falling thickly about us and told that all was over. Our trembling steeds flew like the wind, and before morning we had placed a hundred miles between us and our pursuers—even if they had not been blown to pieces.

I will now pass over a considerable portion of our

adventures, and come at once to the point when having fallen into the hands of a gang of slave traders, we had just reached the coast of Barbary, with the view of being conveyed to the slave-market at Constantinople. In the midst of our captors we were traversing the edge of a high and abrupt precipice, against the foot of which the sea was dashing hundreds of feet below the narrow path, while far out in the offing a ship could be perceived in full sail. Suddenly she hoisted British colours ; and, at the sight of the well-known flag, our hearts were filled with unbearable emotion, and we resolved to make one final effort to regain our liberty. Once more my presence of mind came to our aid—a whisper to Algy ; he nodded, and nerved himself for the daring attempt. A wild ass, feeding in the desert, had come to the top of a low mound by which we were passing, and was staring stupidly at us. I raised my hand, I pointed to it, I uttered a startling cry.

“Look ! look !” I exclaimed, and the heartless slavers turned away their heads, to see what I was pointing at, and for a moment stood gazing at the amazed ass.

That moment was enough. Placing my hands together, I sprung from the cliff and dived fearlessly

into the foaming water beneath, and Algy followed my example. When, roused by the splash, our captors looked round, it was to see us rise to the surface, and strike out boldly for the ship.

On we went, breasting and cleaving the waves. It was a long swim, but when we were almost exhausted, we were seen by those on board the ship, which lowered a boat and picked us up. The water had washed out all traces of the dye, and we forgot all our sufferings in our joy to find ourselves looking like Christians again and among civilised men. The vessel turned out to be an English one, the "Cock and Bull," of Margate, which was conveying a party of excursionists round the Mediterranean. We were kindly received and treated by both crew and passengers. Among the latter, to our surprise, we found no less a person than our old schoolmaster, whom we used to think such a tyrant. But now we had learned wisdom by experience. We told him how sorry we were for all the trouble we had given him, and assured him that after the perils and inconveniences we had passed through, we would gladly go back to our lessons, and never wish for any more adventures. He kindly but firmly pointed out to us our folly, and to punish us for our restless and idle

disposition, ordered us to write out an account of all that had happened to us, as an imposition, during the voyage home to England. This we did as well as we could, and the result is here presented to the reader, who is requested to receive it with indulgent consideration, and if there should seem to be any errors or improbabilities in the narrative, to remember that it is only an imposition.

H. LESSING.



III.

OUR LITTLE ANCESTORS.

BY THE HEADMASTER.

PEOPLE often talk about wishing that they lived in "the good old times," though the fact is that if they could obtain their wish, they would very soon be calling out to get back to the present times, which are, on the whole, not such bad times as we are apt to think of them. Civilisation has perhaps made less difference in the life of boys than in that of men; still there is a difference here, too, as we may see from the scanty accounts of such matters which have come down to us. Nowhere is the difference, and at the same time the similarity, of the life of boys in the past and in the present more fully shown than in some Latin conversations left us by the celebrated scholar Erasmus, who wrote in the sixteenth century, and dwelt with considerable gusto and humour upon scenes of schoolboy life, a subject which most learned authors seem to have thought entirely beneath them. Perhaps a few extracts, freely translated, from his examples of boyish talk in his day

will prove instructive and not uninteresting to youngsters of the nineteenth century.

Fancy yourself walking to school early in the morning, dressed something like the Blue Coat boys, and taking part in the following conversation between John and Sylvius, the latter of whom makes up to the former, and asks why he is in such a hurry.

John. Because, unless I can be in time for the calling of the roll, it is all up with my skin.

Sylvius. You need not be afraid on that score. It is only just five o'clock. . . .

J. But I have to learn yesterday's lesson off by heart, and it's a terribly long one. I am afraid I shan't be able to do it.

S. Well, I am in the same boat as you. I don't quite know my lesson.

J. And how strict our master is! He licks you for everything. Our backs might be made of bull's hide, to see the way he treats us!

S. But he isn't coming to school to-day.

J. Who is going to take his place?

S. Cornelius.

J. That squinting fellow! Oh, we had better look out! He is more fond of flogging than Orbilius.*

S. You are right, and for that reason I have often prayed that his arm might be paralysed.

* Orbilius was a schoolmaster of the time of Horace, through whose mention of him he has gained a very unenviable fame as a merciless schoolmaster.

J. It is not right to pray against your master. We should rather take care not to fall into the hands of that tyrant.

S. Let us go over the lesson together; one saying it, the other looking at the book.

J. That's a good idea.

S. You must not let yourself get flurried, for fear confuses the memory.

J. I could easily put away the fear, if the danger were not at hand. But when the risk is so great, who can keep his head cool?

S. I agree with you; it isn't a question of the head, though, but of the other end.

We see that in the good old times boys had to get up early, and learn their lessons well, for the rod was not spared. These were the days when, as we learn from Ascham, boys ran away from Eton for fear of beating; and, in fact, idle young gentlemen had a bad time of it, unless they happened to be the pets of "cockering mothers," who, old Fuller tells us, would bribe masters with money to be lenient to their sons. Lady Jane Grey's case was different. She rejoiced to escape to her lessons and her "kind and gentle schoolmaster" from the severities of her parents. But the general practice of the age was to treat young people with harshness, which was supposed to be the best way of bringing out good qualities and eradicating

bad ones. We have changed all that for the better, though I know one or two conceited and disagreeable youths who might possibly get some good from a week's experience in the Middle Ages.

Masters in those days were persons not to be trifled with. Here is a specimen of how one taught good behaviour to his pupil :

As often as any one to whom you owe respect speaks to you, stand straight and take off your cap. Don't look glum, nor sulky, nor impudent, nor pert, nor inattentive, but modest and, at the same time, cheerful. Your eyes should be always respectfully fixed on the person who is speaking to you; and keep your feet together, and your hands still. Don't shuffle first with one leg, and then with another, nor fidget with your hands, nor bite your lip, nor scratch your head, nor pick your ears. If you have to answer, do it in as few and well-chosen words as you can, putting in here and there the name or title of honour of the person to whom you speak, and sometimes bend slightly on one knee, at all events when you have finished speaking. Come now, show me if you have been attending. How long have you been away from home?

Pupil. Nearly six months.

Master. You ought to have added *sir*.

P. Nearly six months, sir.

M. Are you not very anxious to get back to your mother?

P. Sometimes.

M. Should you like to see her again?

P. Yes, sir, if you will allow me.

M. Now, you ought to have bent your knee. That's well. Go on in the same way. When you speak, don't gabble, or stammer, or mutter to yourself, but learn to pronounce your words distinctly, clearly, and articulately. If you pass any one older than yourself, any magistrate, clergyman, doctor, or other person of high position, be sure to take off your cap, and don't think it a bother to bend your knee.

In this strain the old dominie runs on, giving his pupil many useful precepts for behaviour at church, at parties, while eating, drinking, and amusing himself, some of which precepts change of manners may have rendered unnecessary or ridiculous in our eyes, but others might well be laid to heart by the youth of the present day, whose strong point is not politeness, if all stories are true. For the gist of these precepts is not to be impertinent to superiors, nor contemptuous to inferiors, nor unkind to equals, which is the sum of good manners.

Then we have a scene in the schoolroom, from which we learn how our young ancestors had their troubles about spilt ink and lost knives, and entertained different opinions as to hard or soft pens, and found difficulty in keeping up with the master when he dictated too quick. But Erasmus deals also with

the playground, to which no apology is necessary for at once repairing. Here is a conversation, in the like of which many of our young readers have no doubt taken part :

Nicolaus. Now our minds, and the weather, and the day invite us to play.

Hieronymus. All these things indeed invite us, but the master only, he doesn't invite us.

N. We must get some fellow to go up as our ambassador, and screw a holiday out of him.

H. You may well say *screw* it out ; for it would be easier to twist the club from the hand of Hercules than to get a holiday out of him. Yet once there was nobody fonder of play than he was.

N. Yes, but now he has forgotten that he was a boy himself.

Grumbling that their master is as stingy of holidays as he is liberal of stripes, these mediæval young idlers proceed to elect Cocles, one of their number, as having a persuasive tongue, and not being easily frightened, to prefer their request, and they assure him that they will all call him a jolly fellow if he succeeds. Cocles, like a good classical scholar, invokes the aid of Mercury in his mission, and respectfully approaches the desk of their preceptor, who receives him with grim humour :

Master. What does this little bit of a man want ?

Cocles. How do you do, most reverend preceptor?

M. H'm ! *Insidiosa civilitas.* I am well enough. What do you want?

C. All the boys beg for a holiday to play.

M. You do nothing else than play, holiday or no holiday.

C. You know, sir, that our minds are invigorated by a certain amount of play, as you yourself have taught us out of Quintilian.

M. Oh, yes ; you can remember what suits you ! Those who work hard have need of play, but with fellows like you, who idle at work and play vigorously, one ought to pull the bit rather than loosen the reins.

C. We do our best ; and if we have not worked as well as we might have done, we shall make up for it now.

M. Oh, indeed !

However, in the end he is induced to grant the holiday on condition that Cocles goes bail for the future diligence and good behaviour of his companions. If they misbehave he shall suffer for it, and they need not trouble themselves to ask another favour of the kind. They may go, but are to play together in the meadows, and not to visit public-houses or other undesirable places of resort ; and they must be home before sunset.

Without waiting to thank the master, as it would appear, Cocles runs off to bear the good news to his anxious companions, and is warmly welcomed and

thanked by them. Then they begin to consult as to what they shall play at, but that question is put off till their arrival at the meadow.

There the boys are split up into different parties. It will be remembered that cricket and football had not then arisen to claim the main energies of summer and winter, as the sun and moon rule day and night. Our friends Nicolaus and Hieronymus are introduced as getting up a game at "fives," or something like it, which Nicolaus, an extremely sententious youth, mentions as a pastime most suitable for exercising all parts of the body, though, he says, it is more fit for winter than summer; while Hieronymus, who is much more like our notion of a boy, remarks that playing at anything comes amiss at no time of the year. Next it is settled whether they shall play with racket-bats or with their hands, the latter being decided upon. Then there is a dispute as to the stakes, for we are sorry to find our young ancestors of opinion that playing for nothing is stupid. Hieronymus, having probably spent all his money, suggests that the winner should be allowed to give the loser a box on the ear, but Nicolaus does not agree, proposing that they should play for a halfpenny a game, the winnings

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to be spent in treating the whole band to beer, from which we must fear that the master's prohibition was not carefully attended to. The next thing is to draw lots or "toss up" for sides, and this matter being settled, the game begins and goes on till evening, and we hear of taking up positions, chalking down the score, struggling hard to win, and other familiar matters which would astonish some of our young friends, who fancy that nothing was ever written in Latin except solemn precepts and dry histories.

Adolphus and Bernardus betake themselves to playing bowls, "at which," says the former to the latter, "you have often boasted that you were such a good hand, and now I'll try you." A match is arranged, and some other boys present, lazy fellows who don't care for exerting themselves on a hot day, we suppose, are engaged to act as umpires. Here again the question is raised what shall be the stakes of the game, and Bernardus makes a suggestion which reminds us only too painfully of resemblances between the sixteenth and nineteenth century.

"It isn't a fine thing to play for money," he says. "You are a German, I am a Frenchman; let each of us play for the honour of his country. If I win, you shall call

out three times 'France for ever!' If I am beaten, which I hope I shan't be, I will do the same in honour of Germany."

In these days, it should be known, when schools and colleges were fewer, and Latin, spoken as well as read among scholars, served as a common language, it was not unusual to find youths of various nations assembled at some celebrated place of education, and many and bitter were the disputes which sometimes arose among them on the score of nationality.

The boys go on playing, and at last Adolphus is pronounced by the umpires to have won, much to the disgust of Bernardus, who will have it that it is "all luck." Then comes the question of paying the penalty agreed upon for the loser, and Bernardus tries hard to get off it, saying that he is hoarse, and in the end mumbling out three times, "Hurrah for Germany!" which, as he is reminded, is not at all the proper way of fulfilling his bargain.

Here again we have Vincentius and Laurentius apparently unable to agree what they shall play at. Jumping is proposed, but Laurentius objects that this exercise is not very agreeable after dinner, to which Vincentius replies that boys who dine in school need not trouble themselves on this score, seeing that they

want their supper as soon as they have finished dinner. From this, as well as from other means of information, we may know that spare diet was the rule in schools of these days ; and no doubt some of our boys who turn up their noses at plain mutton and honest bread-and-butter, would be extremely sorry to change positions with their young ancestors, whom we hear of writing home, not for mere hampers, but for supplies of substantial food, in an earnest and business-like strain that tells a tale of hunger much more distinctly than the little postscript hints in which such requests are commonly conveyed now-a-days.

Laurentius seems to be a little bit of what we should call a molly-coddle, for his next objection to jumping is the fear that he might hurt himself, whereupon his companion proposes a hopping-match, but that also he won't hear of. Well, then, what does he say to jumping with the pole ? no, that won't suit him either ; he thinks it would be more respectable to try a race, especially as this form of amusement has been dignified by a description in Virgil's *Æneid*.

Laurentius. Mark out the course. Let the starting-point be here, and that oak be the goal.

Vincentius. But would that *Æneas* were here to give prizes to the winners !

L. The glory is quite great enough a prize.

V. I think a prize ought rather to be given to the loser to console him.

L. Well, let this be the loser's reward, to go back into the town with a crown of burs on his head.

V. I shall have no objection, if you will go before playing on a fife.

But the proposal for a race does not seem to go beyond this sort of chaff, and presently Laurentius, remarking that it is very hot, suggests a bathe. To this his companion strongly objects, saying that he is not a frog. Laurentius argues that to be able to swim may be of great use to a man, especially if he should be obliged to escape from his enemies ; but the other will not be persuaded even to try to learn, for he says he has heard of a great many practitioners of this art who have swum into the water and have not swum out again. Try with corks, says Laurentius ; but no, Vincentius prefers to trust his feet and to keep on dry land, and if there is to be any swimming, he will assist at it only in the French sense—of looking on.

Here we have another characteristic of our ancestors. Cleanliness in their eyes had not much to do with godliness ; they thought fire a great deal more wholesome than water, if one may judge from the number of heretics they burned, and the baths

which they did *not* build. These boys were talking some time before Britain acquired the empire of the seas, and a long while before she gained her present most creditable reputation for familiarity with the wash-tub, and to them it no doubt seemed quite natural to despise cold water as only fit for frogs, and to suffer from the dreadful diseases to which dirt gives rise.

What are young Gaspar and Erasmus doing with their playtime? I don't quite understand, but they seem to be playing at some game not unlike croquet. We learn that they are striking balls through iron rings, and we hear such familiar phrases as "You are over the line;" "If you move your ball, you lose your turn;" "My ball is in your way—you can't get through;" "Then I will hit yours away." In the end Gaspar is beaten, and has to pay the appointed penalty, which is to make an extemporary verse of poetry in honour of his successful opponent. Boys were more accustomed to making Latin verses than they are now, and Gaspar knocks off a distich which perhaps some of our young scholars can't translate quite so easily :

"Plaudite victori juvenes hic quot-quot adestis.
Nam me qui vicit doctior est nebulo."

Lastly, some other boys are seen to be amateurs of hunting and fishing, though what they call hunting condescends to such small game as frogs and butterflies. One of them astonishes the rest by telling them that if they soak some green walnuts in water and pour it on the ground, they will make the worms come out; another suggests using a fly instead of a bait. Let us hope they had a good day's sport. I think they must have been ambitious young gentlemen; for when one of them suggests that they should play at "nuts," the rest scornfully remind him that they are above such childish games, and we hear that boys who play at "nuts" would be so babyish as to amuse themselves by riding on a stick, which, of course, is all very well in the nursery. In the same way they veto a proposal to play at "How many fingers do I hold up?" as being more suitable for indoors.

Play and lessons, however, did not make up all these boys' lives. Gaspar tells us that he read amusing books in the evening, but not till he had finished all his school-work and whatever he could do for his parents. Among these duties, we find that it was his business to make the table ready for dinner and supper, and to wait on the others, not sitting down to eat himself till he was bid. Young people

in these days were expected to make themselves thoroughly useful at home and to show great respect to their elders. Service was held no disgrace; indeed, it was considered a most important part of the education of boys and girls of good family that they should become attendants in great houses, which were looked upon as the best school of manners. Many a young squire has patiently performed duties over which some of our saucy maid-servants would toss their caps indignantly. And fancy asking one of our fine young ladies who lie on the sofa reading novels, to lay the table for dinner! In this respect, perhaps, we have not improved, though it is to be hoped the day is at hand when all honest labour shall be held as far more worthy than the idle and selfish habits which some silly people admire so much under the name of "gentility."

In one respect our boys and girls cannot be wrong in imitating little Gaspar, who tells us that every morning he prays to God to keep him out of temptation and help him in his work, as if without His help all diligence would be vain, and yet studies as if He would give no help to boys who did not try to do their best. And when he has said good-night to his parents and retired to his "nest," in good time, he

kneels by his bed and thinks over the events of the day, and implores the Divine mercy for what he has done amiss, and gives thanks to Heaven for all its goodness.

IV.

SONNET TO THE MOON.

By J. A. PHILLIPS.

 H, friendly Moon, that shining light dost shed,
 I come to thee because my heart is sore.
 Breathe with thy icy lips, O Moon, and pour
 Thy dewy kisses on my fevered head.
 I loved a Woman fair and bright as thou ;
 Like thee, she seemed to shine up in the skies,
 And I afar did turn on her my eyes ;
 But a dark cloud has hid her from me now,
 The cloud of scornful pride in which she dwells,
 And veils her dazzling splendour from my sight,
 So that all day my heart in silence swells,
 But I creep out to wail my woes at night.
 Ah, better Night and Friendship's silvery ray,
 Than golden Love and maddening glare of Day !

V.

THE GHOST OF BEECHAM MANOR.

BY F. BEESLEY.

THE sun had set one autumn evening, when four or five yeomanry officers were riding home together after attending a drill of their corps. The day had been unusually fine for that time of year, but now a mass of thick black clouds had risen from the west, and a few heavy drops of rain were already beginning to fall. It was plain that a wet night was coming on, a very unpleasant prospect for this party, who were less afraid for their skins than for their new uniforms and accoutrements, especially as most of them had sent their servants on before with their cloaks. In this state of affairs, one of them, Captain Morden by name, whose house was only about two miles off, proposed that the rest should come home and spend the night with him.

“Lots of room at Beecham,” he said, pressing his invitation cordially. “Why, I have half-a-dozen bedrooms that are glad of being slept in once a twelve-month; and my wife and the whole family are away

at Scarborough, so you needn't mind how you look. There isn't a soul with me in the house but old Richard and his wife."

This was a tempting invitation, but two of the officers declined it, saying that their families would be alarmed if they did not come home. The other two, Lieutenant Atkins and Cornet Mayfield, who were young unmarried men, gladly consented to go with their friend. So, saying good-bye to their comrades, and wishing them joy of a wet ride, they turned off at a cross road, and trotted away to Beecham Manor. Soon the trot was changed for a canter, and the canter for a gallop, as the rain came pelting down more and more heavily. Bursts of thunder began to roll, each one louder and nearer; and, though our three officers rode as fast as their tired horses could carry them, they were pretty well ducked before alighting in the courtyard of Morden's house.

It was a large, old, rambling house, with a tumble-down, untidy look as if the owner did not live there enough to make him care for putting it in order. But the wet and tired riders did not stop long to look at the outside of the building. They waited a minute or two at the stables, which were in better repair than any other part of the establishment; then, after seeing

their horses well bestowed in the charge of Richard, the old groom, and a lad fetched from a cottage close by, entered by the back, and made their way into a comfortable oak-panelled parlour, where newly lighted candles were shining with cheerful welcome in the dusky twilight, and a round table was spread with preparations for supper, to be served when the master of the house came home.

The first thing to be done was to get off their wet clothes and send them into the kitchen to be dried by old Betty, Richard's wife. Captain Morden was a considerably bigger man than either of his guests, and was able to lend them each a coat and pair of trousers with room enough and to spare, in which they had a good laugh at the figure they both made. Thus attired they sat down to an early supper, or a late dinner, and by whatever name it was to be called, made a hearty meal, congratulating each other, as they heard the thunder pealing without, that they were safe in such cosy quarters, and pitying their friends who had several miles farther to go through the storm. Supper cleared away, they lighted pipes and cigars, and had a chat about the events of the day, the crops, the elections, the pheasants, and the prospects of the hunting season. When these subjects

were fully discussed, and the clock struck eleven, Mr Atkins proposed that they should go to bed, as he and Mayfield would have to be up early in the morning.

"Well, sound sleep to you," said the host as he lit their candles. "I hope you won't see anything of the ghost."

"Ghost! Have you a ghost?"

"Of course we have. Every respectable house keeps a ghost. Ours is the ghost of old William Semple. He lived here seventy years ago, you know, and was killed in a duel by Sir Frederick Burton, who died next day of his own wounds. It's a bad story, and he was a bad man, old Semple. The most notorious duellist in the county; there were widows and orphans that cursed him every day of their lives; and at last he came to a bad end, run through the body by Sir Frederick one fine morning after a quarrel over cards. They say that from twelve o'clock till cock-crow he walks in the gallery upstairs, all in white, with a bloody sword in his hand. Old Betty declares that she has seen him twice; and certainly there are queer noises enough in this old place at night; but for my part I always go to sleep as soon as I lay my head on the pillow, so he doesn't

trouble me much. My daughters won't sleep near the gallery when they are here. But I hope you don't trouble about ghosts."

"I should like to see a ghost or two, just as a curiosity," laughed Cornet Mayfield.

"My dear fellow, this is the nineteenth century," said Lieutenant Atkins.

"So it is," said Morden, "and we who live in it think ourselves very clever fellows. Perhaps, though, there may be a thing or two yet that we don't quite understand. But ghost or no ghost, I hope your beds are aired." And with this he led the way upstairs into a long gallery running the whole breadth of the house, which by the dim light of the three candles was seen to be hung with old armour, foxes' heads, deer's horns, and other trophies and curiosities. At one end of this was a short passage leading to a bedroom into which he showed Mayfield, then hurried after Atkins, who was yawning along the gallery, and saw him into a similar apartment at the other end.

Cornet Mayfield now found himself alone in a long, low room, dark with oak panels and heavy curtains. A fire was blazing in the grate, which had been lit to air the room, and its light fell on a tall mahogany

wardrobe big enough to hold half-a-dozen men, and on a picture beside it. This was a full-length portrait of a man in the costume of the last century. The face was dark and fierce, and as Mayfield held up his candle to examine it, he almost started. He could have sworn the picture frowned at him.

“Well, I am not going to be afraid at nothing, but I would just as soon not sleep with such an ugly-looking fellow so near me,” he said, setting down his candle as far away from the picture as possible, and glancing round at the old room with a certain feeling of discomfort. Mr Mayfield was not accustomed to old rooms; he was the son of a manufacturer, who lived in a brand-new house, in a brand-new town, in a brand-new district, where already there was scarcely room for so much as a ghost to pick up an honest livelihood.

As soon as possible he got into bed, putting on one of Morden’s nightshirts, which reached to his feet, and blowing out the candle, which he wished had been a little longer in case of accidents. But he did not feel very like going to sleep. The thunder kept on pealing without; and Mayfield could not keep himself from thinking about old William Semple. No doubt this was his picture; and, as the Cornet lay

tucked up in bed, with his face turned to the fire, he couldn't help looking at it, and feeling as if it was looking at him. So presently he turned round and tried to make himself comfortable on the other side. But he could not be comfortable; he was used to a hard bed, and this was a feather one into which he sank wallowing about like a porpoise, and soon began to feel feverish and restless.

"I wish I had gone home," he grumbled to himself. "A wet jacket and have done with it, that would have been all; but now I don't believe I shall sleep a wink in this stuffy hole. Of course, it's all humbug about ghosts, but I don't like the look of the place. Hallo! What's that noise now? Morden coming upstairs, I suppose."

He turned round again to listen, and as his eye fell on the dark window curtain, he fancied it moved.

"Why, this is as bad as when my old nurse sat at the bedside and told us ghost stories. How she used to make my blood run cold with her silly croaking. I remember now she told us about old William Semple. It's a story well known all through the country. She said he was bound to walk every night with his shroud and his bloody sword for a hundred years; but I should think he must have caught the

rheumatism long ago. Ha! ha! fancy a ghost with rheumatism."

Just then the fire flickered up, and the light fell strongly on the face of the portrait, which again seemed to have the expression of life, and Mayfield couldn't help a little shudder as he caught the fierce gaze.

"If this was my own house, I would throw you out of the window," he said. "Now then, what's that noise? A step in the gallery. No, it must be a rat in the wall. Morden might just as well have put Atkins and me to sleep in the same room. I don't think I can be very well; but really I must not go on fancying that I hear all sorts of things. There again! Surely it is not fancy this time."

Twelve o'clock had just struck upon a wheezing, mumbling clock at the foot of the stairs; and when the echoes of the last stroke died away, the Cornet was almost certain that he heard a stealthy foot creeping up the staircase. So plain did it seem, that he started up in bed with the perspiration bursting on his forehead, and sat expecting every instant that a hand would be laid on the door handle. But when he had strained his ears for two or three minutes, the sound had gone; nothing was to be heard but the thunder, now rolling in the distance.

“ Oh ! ” he drew a long sigh, as if to clear his brain, and lay down again. But turn and twist as he would, he could not feel at ease, and the picture always seemed to be looking at him. At last he got up, stirred the fire, and drew the curtains close before getting into bed again. This made him feel more hot and restless, so he got up again and pulled them partly back. Then he kicked one or two of the half-dozen pillows to the other end of the room, and in his mind abused poor old Betty for being too zealous to make him comfortable.

“ What fools old women are,” he said to himself. “ I wonder what frightened her, when she thought she saw the ghost. Perhaps it was this picture that she saw. Perhaps it was the moonlight ; I am glad there is no moon to-night. Perhaps she was drunk.”

Presently he got up again, lit his candle, and not without some misgivings peeped out into the gallery. Nothing was stirring there, and he walked quietly along it once or twice, trying not to be afraid of the dark corners and shadows which his little candle made visible. The walk cooled him, barefooted and in his night-shirt, and he returned to bed feeling more at ease, but soon grew as hot and excited as ever. “ Oh ! I wish the thunder would stop,” he groaned. “ I wish they

wouldn't put me in a room with a picture ugly enough to frighten an archdeacon. I wish I could get to sleep. I wish I had a chance to wring the necks of all the birds whose feathers are stuffed into this confounded bed. I wish Morden wouldn't ask a fellow to a house where there are ghosts and rats—there again!—that couldn't have been a rat."

Thus the poor young yeoman lay fidgeting and flurrying himself for the best part of an hour, and could not get to sleep. Every five minutes there was a noise somewhere or other, which, magnified by his heated imagination, made him almost think against his better reason that some unearthly being must be moving about the house. At last he could stand it no longer, when he heard the door of his room creaking two or three times, and jumped out of bed to shut it fast. But he had hardly taken two steps towards the door before he tripped up on the hem of his long night-shirt, and in falling brought down something with a clang. This gave him a fright, especially when putting out his hand he touched something cold and smooth. But a moment afterwards, he recognised that it was his sword, and felt ashamed of himself for being such a fool.

He stood up and listened with throbbing temples. There again was the sound as of a step in the gallery.

He would go once more and try to find out what was the cause of it. Pooh! there was nothing to be afraid of. He lit his candle with a vesuvian, and to give himself confidence, drew his maiden sword, and felt quite bold with the long bright blade in his hand.

Resolved to overcome his nervousness, he softly pushed open the bedroom door, and stole along the narrow passage leading to the gallery. Here was another door, and as he opened it the draught blew out his candle, and he found himself in the dark at the end of the gallery. He made one step forward, and paused. All pitch dark and silence; nothing to be seen or heard. He had hoped a cat would scamper off, but no—yes—there was a creaking sound at the further end of the gallery—what was coming?

The clock struck one!

He was not mistaken. Something white was gliding noiselessly out from the opposite door. Cornet Mayfield held his breath, and almost dropped his sword. The thing was there; now it stood motionless in front of him about twenty paces off.

“Who’s there?” he gasped, and at the same moment a hoarse, sepulchral voice echoed back his words.

Then a flash of lightning for a moment lit up the long dark gallery, and the Cornet distinctly saw at

the other end *a tall figure, robed in white from head to foot, with a drawn sword in its hand.* For one instant he stood as if turned to stone ; then a cock crew outside, and the figure seemed to vanish as Mayfield, making a great effort, stepped back, and as soon as he found himself out of the gallery, rushed into his room, locked the door behind him, and plunged into bed. The thunder was pealing in his ears, and the ghastly figure was still in his eyes, though he scarcely knew whether they were open or shut ; nor when he had buried his head beneath the bedclothes, could he keep out that terrible sight and that fearful sound. Mayfield never spent such a night in his life.

Next morning, the two gallant officers came down looking as if neither of them had spent a very good night. Their host rallied them on it, and said he hoped they had not seen the ghost.

“Upon my word, I don’t think these things are to be joked about,” said Atkins.

“What ! you have seen something then ?”

“Well, I know you fellows will laugh at me, and I don’t know whether I was dreaming or not, but I never felt so like gooseflesh in my life, as I did about the middle of last night.”

"Tell us. What was it?" asked Morden eagerly; and Mayfield opened his eyes wide.

"I will tell you what I saw, or seemed to see, and you may judge for yourselves. All the first part of the night I was troubled with noises of different kinds in that old gallery, which prevented me from getting to sleep. I read a book that I found in the room till my candle was burned out, and several times I got up and walked out into the gallery, but could see nothing. At last I could have sworn I heard a clash of swords and a footstep. I jumped up, drew my sword, and went out determined to find out if any one was playing tricks on me. Then——"

"Good heavens! Did you see it, too?" cried Mayfield, half rising from his seat.

"As I came out of my room, the clock struck one, and I felt a cold thrill run through me. A dim white figure was standing at the other end of the gallery. I won't pretend I wasn't afraid, because I was."

"Just what I saw!" exclaimed Mayfield.

"I called out *Who's there?* and my words were echoed back in a low unearthly voice."

"So did I."

"Then came a flash of lightning, which lit up the gallery for a moment, and I distinctly saw a shadowy

white figure, with wild staring eyes, and a drawn sword in its hand. I stood still for an instant, as if rooted to the spot; and at last, as I stepped back, the figure disappeared."

"Just what happened to me," said Mayfield; "I shall never forget the horrible expression of its face. The figure vanished as a cock crew outside."

"And so it did when I saw it," said Atkins; "I say! we seem to have seen it at the same time. Why, Mayfield, had you your sword?"

"Yes; and so had you——?"

He was interrupted by a roar of laughter from Morden.

"You must have seen each other."

"Then you were the ghost?"

"And you were my ghost."

"You were both ghosts. Oh, what a joke! You'll turn me into a ghost with laughing."

Atkins and Mayfield looked at one another for a moment; then they, too, burst into a laugh.

"What a fool I was not to have thought of you sleeping at the other end of the gallery!"

"I never dreamed it could have been you."

"How about the horrible expression of my face?"

"What do you think of my wild, staring eyes?"

"There!" said the host; "don't quarrel now, after

running away from each other with drawn swords in your hands. Sit down to breakfast, and see if the ghost has taken away your appetites. But I tell you what it is, my boys, this joke is too good to be lost, and it will be a long time before you hear the end of it."

Captain Morden was right. Lieutenant Atkins and Cornet Mayfield never saw a ghost again; but they heard a good deal of the one which had so much alarmed them both in the gallery of Beecham Manor.



VI.

A VISIT TO THE BANK OF ENGLAND.

BY J. F. MURRAY.

FTER undertaking to contribute to "The Holiday Task," I was at first very much at a loss what subject to choose. But when, on a visit to London during the holidays, I made one of a party who had the privilege of being shown over the Bank of England, it struck me that an article giving some slight account of what we saw, could not fail to be interesting; and as, moreover, the officials to whose courtesy and kindness we were so much indebted, informed me that they had no objection to my *taking notes* in one sense though not in another, I made up my mind to attempt this short description.

We arrived in good time at the Bank, which is a large, low edifice, in most parts only one story high, with cellars beneath. On account of this lowness and as the wall surrounding it is mainly relieved by sham doors and windows, the first effect is not very imposing; but the front towards the Royal Exchange is remarkably handsome. Entering we found ourselves

wandering among a maze of low irregular buildings separated by courts of different shapes and sizes, through which all sorts of people were hurrying to and fro without taking any notice of us, as we stared about us at the many doors and stairs, and scarcely knew where to turn our steps. But soon we were taken in charge by a polite person in livery, and he led us by a colonnade and a long passage to the office of Mr C——, who had kindly undertaken to show us over the Bank.

Provided with a key that opened every door, Mr C—— led the way, and first ushered us into the Bank parlour, a handsome well-furnished room where the directors meet weekly to decide on money matters of such magnitude that we might well look round with awe and tread gingerly on the soft carpet. But to-day it was empty; the only member of the establishment that occupied this large room being a fine old Persian cat that lay on the rug enjoying the full benefit of a blazing fire, and licking its paws with an air of great dignity and responsibility. Each department, we were told, had a cat on its staff, for whose maintenance a small sum was allowed weekly, to keep down any avaricious mice that might attempt to rob the Bank of England.

The windows of the Bank parlour look out upon a quiet, pretty court, planted with flowers and trees, and having a fountain in the centre. This was once the churchyard of St Christopher-le-Stocks, the whole of which parish, as well as part of two or three others, is now covered by the Bank buildings ; and this church-yard being consecrated ground cannot be built on.

So far as we had gone, we had seen nothing to remind us of Aladdin's palace or Ali Baba's cave, but in the next department we entered, which was a small bare-looking room, we got a hint that we were in a place where money was as common as dirt. There were sovereigns about everywhere, which had been sent in to be counted and weighed ; sovereigns in a great heap on the table like nuts on a fruit-stall ; sovereigns lying on the floor waiting for somebody to pick them up ; sovereigns being weighed by batches of two hundred and fifty at a time ; sovereigns coming down a row of long spouts, which handed them over to a very interesting machine far more able to pronounce on their character than the cleverest man. As each coin reached the bottom of the spout it was neatly laid on a button and kept there about a second till the machine seemed to have made up its mind about it. If it was of the proper weight it was

presently thrown over to the right, and disappeared ; but when a light one came, the button gave it a contemptuous toss and threw it into another receptacle on the left. The machinery by which this was done is simple enough. The contrivance is a balance, one end of which rises and falls, according as the coin placed on it is light or heavy, and which thus exposes this coin to a blow from one or other of two hammers striking to the right or left. But till we were shown the works inside, we were very much puzzled to know how the little button could have such honesty and judgment. If it were to deceive, there is in the room a scale which will weigh the thousandth part of a grain accurately. When the sovereigns are found light, they are at once put into another machine, which presently bundles them out into a bowl after clipping them through as a sign that they are fit for nothing but to be melted down again and re-coined.

From this we went into a large room where clerks were receiving and examining coins, gold at one end, and silver at the other, and we were shown one or two bad half-crowns which had just been picked out of a large pile. We passed on into the treasury, a room full of iron safes containing different kinds of notes and coins ready to be issued as required. Each

safe was closed by two keys in charge of separate officials, and on one being opened, we saw that it was filled with small canvas bags, each of which, we were informed, contained 70,000 pounds. But the whole amount of coin in the treasury was "a mere trifle of two millions or so for immediate use." In another safe we were shown bundles of thousand-pound notes, and I had the satisfaction of holding a million of money in each hand for half-a-minute.

We now came to the department where the notes that have been in circulation are received, registered, and packed away. No note is issued twice, and each note is kept in the cellars of the Bank for seven years, in case of being required for reference, and is then destroyed. A busy crowd of men and boys seated along several rows of desks were engaged in sorting out the notes received the day before, and marking them according to a system by which every note has its birth, death, and burial accurately recorded, and in about five minutes can be brought to light at any time within the seven years. It quite bewildered me to see the rapidity with which a boy of fifteen was checking them off in a book, using a stamp so contrived that if he made a mistake in his work, it could be brought home to him among all the rest, if it were discovered

years afterwards. At one end of the room, in a little glass-partitioned box, a clerk was counting carelessly-tied-up packets, marked as containing so many thousand pounds' worth of notes sent in by well-known banking firms, and when the numbers were ascertained to be correct, they were taken on one side, had a corner torn off, and a hole punched in each of them, then were handed over to be entered and stowed away in the cellars.

In these cellars we walked with a lantern through narrow passages between walls of little wooden boxes containing cancelled notes to the number of ninety-four millions. These boxes, if set in a row, would stretch for three miles. The notes, placed in a pile, would be eight miles high, or, if sewn together, would make a ribbon 15,000 miles long, or spread out over Hyde Park, would completely cover it and leave something to spare. Their value when in circulation would be £3,000,000,000, and they weigh more than 112 tons. Even as waste paper they would be worth between two and three thousand pounds.

Here we were shown some notes which are too curious to be destroyed. One, very ragged, dirty, and almost illegible, is of the date of 1699, five years after the foundation of the Bank. Another was kept

as having been in circulation for one hundred and eleven years ; it was for £25, which sum at compound interest would in this time have realised £6000. But the most interesting of all was a thousand-pound note with which the gallant Lord Dundonald paid the fine inflicted on him as the result of the unjust accusation and unfair trial that drove him from his native country. On the back, in faded brown letters, we could just read these words :

"My health having suffered from long and close confinement, and my oppressors being resolved to deprive me of property or life, I submit to robbery to protect myself from murder, in the hope that I may live to bring the delinquents to justice. COCHRANE."

On we went through passage after passage, and room after room, most of them small and lighted from the top, where the most important processes were being carried on quietly and easily, by the aid of well adapted machinery, among which I was fairly lost in wonder, and cannot remember half I saw. Everything is done within the walls; we saw ruling, stitching, binding, printing, stamping, and the other processes which are necessary to turn out a bank note into the world and keep an account of it till it comes back to end its days in the cellars above which it was born. The most interesting process was certainly the preparing of the stereotype plates from which the notes

are printed. The type having been set up in the usual way, a sheet of thick, soft *papier-mâché* was laid over it, and after one or two smart pats to make it fit tight, was drawn off with the impression of every letter stamped into it. This is called the matrix, and upon it was pressed a sheet of hot type-metal like lead, which presently, while we looked on, was drawn out with the characters raised on it and standing out so clearly in relief that we could read them almost as easily as on paper. From these plates the prepared bank-note paper receives one impression after another, till by the engraved signature of the chief cashier it becomes worth the sum stamped upon it.

The printing seemed to be chiefly carried on by boys, smudgy-faced fellows in white blouses, who, no doubt, were longing to have done with hundred-pound notes, and to get home to their tea and a bit of bacon. The notes were printed by cylinder presses, each one registering the number of impressions it made, in case its young attendant should play any tricks ; but it was curious to see how grave and business-like the boys all were, though I caught two of them winking at each other when our backs were turned. Then as we were about to pass on to the next department, a sleepy-looking youth came up with a great

bundle of double notes which he cut in two with a small machine, and they were ready for issue. We now went into a low fire-proof room, that we should never have looked at twice, if we had not been told it contained a few millions of notes. Thence we passed on, taking a peep into a kitchen where some scores of people seemed to have just been dining, and descended to the bullion cellars.

Two or three men were keeping sharp watch here, but our friend's key admitted us, and the gentleman in charge showed us round with as much politeness as if we had all been millionaires. We now found ourselves in a narrow vaulted passage, brightly lit up by gas, and the first thing we noticed was a number of great bars of what looked like dirty lead peeping out of a frayed covering of cloth or leather. "These," said our guide, "are solid silver, each weighing some 3000 ounces;" and as we stood calculating how much they might be worth, we were told the Bank would not object to our pocketing such a trifle, and that we were welcome to take a couple of bars home with us if we liked. That was very generous, seeing that I couldn't even lift one for the life of me.

Then we went on to the gold, and saw coins of different countries, which the Bank had bought, and

were going to send to the Mint in due time. But turning a corner, we came upon several trucks, loaded with bricks of pure gold. Each brick was worth £800 or so, and the contents of a truck were not much under £100,000. The metal looked dull and stupid enough, and I couldn't help wondering how people were tempted to do and suffer so much for its sake, and to understand how the celebrated Miss Kilman-segg might come to grow weary of—

“Gold ! gold ! gold ! gold !
Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
Molten, graven, hammered and rolled ;
Heavy to get, and light to hold ;
Hoarded, bartered, bought and sold,
Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled ;
Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
To the very verge of the churchyard mould.”

We now returned to the upper air, and saw the rooms where stocks are transferred and dividends paid, the latter crowded with people who had come to receive their money, and some of whom, especially the old ladies, seemed a little confused and overawed by the working of this one department, so no wonder if we were rather bewildered after seeing so much. Desks and ledgers, too, looked tame and uninteresting after the treasures we had just had a glimpse of ; we had been walking about for more than three hours,

so, on the whole, I was not sorry to return to Mr C——'s room, where the last curiosity shown us was a collection of the notes of the Bank since its foundation, and also of copper plates that had been used by forgers to imitate them.

On our way out we looked into the library of the clerks, a pleasant reading-room stored with books of reference, and ornamented with pictures painted and presented by officials of the Bank. There were fourteen thousand books in the library, we were told, which is a better collection than many large towns possess. But if the people employed in the establishment, with their families and those dependent on them, were collected together, they would populate a town of some size; for, officials, clerks, porters, boys, and all, the staff amounts to more than a thousand persons, who now, the hours of work being over, were dispersing in various directions to all parts of the city and suburbs. And, as we passed out, we met a detachment of the Guards marching in to take charge of the building during the night.

Thus ended our visit to the Bank of England, one of the most interesting and instructive sights to which it was ever my good fortune to be admitted.

VII.

THE MIDNIGHT MYSTERY:

AN HISTORICAL TALE OF THE FEUD BETWEEN THE GUELFS
AND THE GIBELLINES.

BY BALBUS AND A FRIEND OF HIS, CHIEFLY THE FRIEND.

I.

THE grass now grows in the deserted courtyards of one of the most magnificent of the palaces which line the canals of Venice. Tall and dark, built of massive masonry, and full of Gothic windows, it still attracts the notice of the passer-by. The careless gondolier ceases his song as he rows past that lofty but uninhabited pile, and the thoughtful visitor wandering through the row of dungeons which form the basement story, pauses to reflect on the deeds of horror which have very probably been acted within these gloomy walls.

Many centuries ago, this was the abode of the Count Ugolino, one of the most prominent members of the Guelf faction. He was a suitable tenant of such an edifice, being a dark, silent man of stern and relentless character. He scarcely ever went out of

doors, but spent much time in solitary meditation ; and it was whispered that he had dealings with the powers of magic. Mothers trembled for their children when they caught the piercing glance of that haughty eye, and the Pope had often tried to secure the services of such a man for the secret tribunal of the Inquisition.

Next door to him lived the young and gay Count Adolfo di Macaroni, belonging to an influential branch of the party of the Ghibellines.

II.

Count Adolfo had just returned from a masked ball, and was about to retire to rest, when his attention was aroused by a familiar sound. It was a favourite cat mewing in the courtyard and apparently wishing to be let in. Accordingly he proceeded by a secret passage to a heavy iron door, which, on a spring being pressed, flew back, and he stepped forth into the open air.

For a minute or two he stood looking out into the deep shadows of the court, but the cat was nowhere to be seen. He was about to return when he cast his eyes upwards to the balcony of his neighbour's house, where, shown clearly by the light of the moon while

he himself was concealed in the shade, he perceived a well-known tall figure wrapped in a cloak. The Count Ugino was pacing along the balcony, his arms folded, his eyes now turned to the sky, now bent downwards.

“Strange!” muttered Adolfo, crouching back into the darkest corner. “Night after night he thus walks like a troubled spirit. Some awful crime must lie heavy on his conscience, or perchance he meditates some dread villainy. I will pause awhile and mark him.”

As these thoughts passed through the young Count’s mind, Ugino stopped and exclaimed aloud :

“Am I never to find rest? Sleep, wilt thou ever be banished from my eyes? No—death itself were better than this nightly torture. She must die!”

These words he uttered with such intensity of passion, that Adolfo, lying hid in the obscurity, could not refrain from a shudder. But the night was cold and he was sleepy; so for the present he went to bed, leaving Count Ugino to pace up and down the balcony.

III.

Next evening when the rest of his household had retired for the night, Adolfo again stole forth and

took up his position in the shadow of a massive buttress, from which he was able, unseen, to watch his neighbour's mysterious proceedings.

Before long Uglino appeared on the balcony as before, and after standing for some time with his head buried in his cloak, apparently lost in profound thought, he resumed his soliloquy of the previous evening :

“ Yes ! she must die, and peace will once more be mine. To-morrow night the deed shall be done. Ha ! here comes my trusty minion.”

A muffledplash of oars was now heard, and a black gondola glided beneath the palace walls. From this emerged a man disguised as a monk, and wearing a black mask. Bringing a ladder out of the boat he placed it against the wall of Uglino's mansion, and softly stole up into the balcony.

“ Thou art come ! ” said the Count.

“ I am,” replied the bravo, for in spite of his disguise, he was evidently one of those mercenary tools of villainy.

“ 'Tis well,” rejoined Uglino hoarsely. “ I have need of thee. Listen ! ”

Adolfo strained his ears and eyes. But the bravo and his employer now spoke in such low tones, that

he could hear nothing but the chink of gold which the latter was dropping into the former's palm. The shining coins glittered in the moonlight, and again Adolfo shuddered. It was the price of blood.

The bravo now prepared to descend.

"Set your mind at rest, noble Count," he said, as he placed his foot on the ladder. "Before to-morrow's sun has set, she is in thy hands."

"Ha! ha!" replied Uglino, with a hideous laugh. And turning on his heel, he vanished into the palace.

Count Adolfo hastened to emerge from his concealment, and to enter his house with that fearful laugh still ringing in his ears. He retired to bed, but not to sleep.

"Beware, Uglino!" he murmured as he tossed to and fro on his luxurious couch. "Whatever dark design thou hast on foot, my eye shall be upon thee."

IV.

The shades of next night had no sooner fallen than Adolfo was at his post. Wrapped in a thick mantle of purple velvet and fur, as a protection against the nocturnal dews, he gained the top of his house through a trap-door, and lying down, fixed his eyes on that of his neighbour. His mind was a prey to

mingled dread and curiosity, and in case of need he had brought with him a rope ladder and a dark lantern.

The moon again shone, but heavy clouds drifted over the face of the sky, and an icy breeze penetrated to the very bones of the watcher.

For hours Adolfo lay thus concealed, scarcely venturing to draw his breath. But all was still in the neighbouring mansion. In one window alone there glimmered a subdued light, across which from time to time passed a tall shadow.

As the bell of St Mark's tolled forth the hour of twelve, the Count Uglino glided forth on the balcony, dragging behind him a sack.

Adolfo stretched forward his head with such eagerness that he had almost overbalanced himself and toppled down into the courtyard below. The sudden peril made him dizzy; his eyes failed him; and at this moment the moon was hidden behind a passing cloud. He could see nothing, but his ears were the more excited and active. He heard a faint cry, a brief struggle, then something fell with a heavy splash into the water beneath, and once more all was silent.

The moon shone forth again, and Adolfo beheld

the mysterious Count standing, with his arms folded, on the balcony, looking grimly down into the black stream beneath his feet.

“Tis over!” he said in a deep thrilling voice. “The dead are silent for ever, and now I can rest in peace.”

He retired within the gloomy walls, and the horrified Adolfo lost not a moment in making his way into the street. Hurrying along the canal, he soon encountered a gondola, which at that late hour was plying for hire on the chance of finding a benighted passenger. He leapt on board, and exclaimed in a voice trembling with emotion, “To the Doge’s palace! Haste!”

V.

Early next morning, while Count Uglino was still in bed, the officers of justice broke into his chamber and seized him. Scarcely giving him time to don his cloak and rapier, they hurried him before the tribunal of the Doge.

“Unfortunate man,” said this magistrate, sternly, “what dreadful crime is this which thou art accused of having committed? Whom hast thou thus secretly murdered in the dead of night?”

Uglino smiled a bitter smile, and cast a sinister glance upon Adolfo.

At this moment a cry was heard, and the officers who had been despatched to drag the canal returned, bearing a sack in their arms. The crowd of spectators gave way to let them approach and lay their dripping burden before the judicial chair.

“Open it,” said the Doge.

Amid profound silence the sack was opened, and in the sight of all present there was drawn forth the dead body of a handsome cat. A cry burst from the crowd. Count Uglino smiled triumphantly, and exclaimed :

“She disturbed my rest. Thus is Uglino avenged !”

“Ruthless villain !” cried Adolfo, drawing his blade. “She was mine ! I loved her.”

He sprang forward, and in a moment the swords of the two proud nobles were crossed.

“Part them !” shouted the Doge; and the bystanders hastened to obey his bidding, or blood would have been shed on that venerable spot.

VI.

The Doge decided that Uglino should pay half-a-ducat as the value of the cat, and the costs of the

trial. Both he and Adolfo were also fined ten ducats for contempt of court.

With a haughty smile Uglino flung down a purse of gold, and strode forth from the hall. Adolfo would have followed him, but he was restrained by the Doge's orders, and bound over to keep the peace.

From that day there was a bitter feud between the two families, and for many a year the people of Venice used to tell with bated breath the story of Uglino's vengeance and Adolfo's indignation.



GORDON BROWNE

VIII.

OUR SUNDAY ALONE.

By Miss B. MURRAY.*

IT really was too bad. Papa was in Germany on business, and now mother must leave us.

"I think Aunt Butter is a nuisance," said candid Tom. "Why does she want you?"

"She is ill, my dear," said mother. "But I shall be sure to be back on Monday."

A howl from us all. "Away on Sunday! Oh, mother!" I cry with the greatest sorrow, for, as the eldest of the family, I foresee what a responsibility is about to fall on me. My brothers also vehemently protest; but it is all of no use, and mother starts off next morning, leaving us to take care of ourselves.

I only hoped Sunday would be fine, but it was wet—pouring.

"We can't go to church to-day, Ellie," said Tom, looking out of the window at the dripping trees.

"But, Tom—" I began doubtfully.

* Kindly communicated to "The Holiday Task," through her brother.

"Oh, mother wouldn't mind," said Tom, airily. "You know it is at least two miles off, and I have just had such a cold. I'll tell you what: we'll all read a sermon just now, and perhaps it will be fine in the afternoon—eh?"

There was something in this. We were spending the summer on the Clyde, and as we were English Church people, our nearest place of worship was a schoolroom used as a chapel, which was not like a regular church in our eyes. I agreed to my brother's proposal, and found a volume of sermons for myself, as well as others which I distributed to Tom and Frank. Archie pleaded that he was too young, and wanted to draw; so on a faithful promise that he would learn some catechism after a bit, I furnished him with pencil and paper. But presently my scruples were excited when I found he was drawing pictures of people who were a great deal too funny to be drawn on Sunday.

"Oh, Archie, you mustn't!" I said. "You should draw pictures of Noah's ark, or of churches. You shouldn't draw people to-day."

"But these people are going to church," argued Archie.

Here was a puzzling question. I felt that I should

soon have to make a stand against the worldliness of my brothers, but was not sure where to draw the line. For the meantime I compromised with Archie by persuading him to copy the picture of Daniel in the lions' den from an authorised Sunday book.

Presently entered Tibby, our old Edinburgh servant, who had stayed at home to cook the dinner, and just looked in to see how we were behaving. Tibby was almost deaf, a privilege of which she often availed herself to think out loud. As she had nursed most of us, she did not stand on ceremony.

“A’ at their books! Sic religious!” she remarked audibly on the present occasion; and withdrew, snorting suspiciously.

This made me uneasy. There was an unnatural quietness in my brothers’ conduct, which roused my suspicions also. I kept looking up from my not too interesting book, and at last caught Frank silently chuckling over his. Not seeing what he could find to laugh at in the grave work with which I had supplied him, I stole behind and looked over his shoulder. It was “Old Mortality.”

“Frank!” I exclaimed in horror.

“Well, my dear?” said he in his cool, lazy way.

“Tom, do make him stop that book.”

Tom makes no answer, but appears confused and guilty. I now perceive that his sermon book also has been exchanged for a volume of Scott's novels.

"Boys, this is Sunday," I inform them severely.
"What would mother say?"

But though Tom looks rather conscience-stricken, Frank impolitely requests me to hold my tongue, and mind my own affairs. At this I assume a great air of dignity, and once more appeal to Tom: "You mustn't behave so on Sunday. I won't have it."

"Nonsense, Ellie," said Tom, roughly, "you are not to domineer over us. I shall do as I like."

But all the same, he shut the book, and walked off to the window yawning. Frank followed his example, and presently went out to see if the rain was going to stop. He incited Archie to follow him in his slippers. I remonstrated strongly, and by threats of calling in Tibby, prevailed on Archie to come back. Frank stayed out, getting his Sunday clothes wet. I sat stern and gloomy over my book of sermons. Tom began to flip nutshells about the room, and, whether by design or accident, two or three struck me in the face. I got angry, and wished I had no brothers.

Then Frank returned, making muddy marks on the carpet with his wet boots, and calling out

loudly : "Let's do something, Tom. I'm sure it can't be right to be idle on Sunday. Never mind Ellie ; she's trying to give herself very proper airs, as if she was grown up."

This was too much. I rose with offended pride, and sailed off to my own bedroom, where I locked the door and sulked. I felt virtuous, but unhappy. Oh dear ! why are boys so naughty ?

A great noise now went on downstairs, but after a time it ceased, and a deputation from my brothers came up and knocked at my door. I remained rigidly silent, and after trying the door, and knocking several times, the deputation, whoever he was, went back. Then they all came and held a whispered consultation in the passage. They were desirous of propitiating me. I began to soften towards them, and at the next knock, replied, "Who's there ?"

"It's me," said Tom. "Come out, will you ?"

"I won't," said I. "Go away. I am ashamed of you, boys."

"But we are going to be good," Frank's voice chimed in. "Tremendously good. Really now."

"Please come," added Tom.

It is certainly very dull in my bedroom, so I relent, and emerge cautiously, half afraid of some trap. But

G



I have wronged the boys. They seem glad to have me with them again, and peaceably conduct me downstairs.

The parlour has a peculiar look. All the chairs are heaped in one corner, except two on their backs near the door; the table has been pushed out of the way; a tent, made out of a railway rug, is erected over the sofa.

“What are you going to do?” I asked suspiciously.

“We are going to have a Scripture-game,” answered Tom, looking at me as if he was not sure how I would take it; while Frank hastened to assure me that it was very Sundayish and proper indeed.

I was resolved to be tolerant, so without any further objection I accepted an invitation to sit down beside Archie on the hearth-rug.

“These are camels,” Tom explains in an offhand way, as he left the room, pointing to the chairs on their backs.

I felt doubtful, but made no remark, and presently Tom re-enters, arrayed in my bathing-gown, with a towel round his head, and, after intimating that he is a Scripture character, sits down on the ground in a despondent attitude.

“Job!” I guess, but Tom shakes his head.

After a short pause, during which Tom looks embarrassed and impatient, Frank appears, clad sumptuously in a white petticoat and my blue dressing jacket, with a large water jug poised on his head.

"What *are* you doing?" I cry, bewildered and uneasy in my conscience.

"Hush! it's a Biblical charade," says Frank, seriously. "Ho! stranger, what desirest thou?" This to Tom, who rejoins:

"Nay, maid, be pacified. Accept these jewels."

"Rebekah at the well!" cried Archie in great delight; but I rebuked him, and jumped up, vehemently protesting.

"Hang it, Ellie," said Tom. "Don't interrupt. There is no harm in it."

"There is," I cry hotly. "It's making fun of the Bible. I never saw anything so disgraceful in my life. Tom, Frank, you *must* stop this."

Tom growls; Frank says something uncomplimentary about girls in general and me in particular. But in the end I prevail, and the game is stopped. Tom flings himself on the sofa discontentedly; Frank pokes the fire viciously; I set the room to rights, aided by Archie, over whom I have still some influence. But when I have no further active employment for

him, Archie deserts me, and goes over to Frank. We are all silent, uncomfortable and ill-humoured.

I now made a great mistake. Instead of coaxing Archie back to his allegiance, I tried to be high-handed, and ordered him to come with me into the next room and learn his catechism. The very name of catechism was enough to make Archie rebellious ; and Frank encouraged him.

“Don’t you go. She has no right to order you about because you are in knickerbockers.”

“Very well,” said I, with the air of a martyr. “You older boys ought to know better, and not to make Archie as bad as yourselves. I shall tell mamma.”

“Tell-tale!” burst out Tom. Tom was evidently in a bad temper.

“If you are going to tell, we may as well do something worth telling about,” said Frank.

After this, I was afraid he would begin to break something, or play at ball ; but he continued to lie on the hearth rug, and amused himself by heating the poker, and making lunges with it at me whenever I passed him. Tom walked to the window and stood drumming discontentedly with his fingers on the glass, and watching the drops roll down. I stayed in the

room, for my spirit was up, and I was determined to keep my brothers out of mischief as far as I could.

Now the spirit of mischief came upon Frank. He put the hot poker into Archie's hand, and slyly pointed to Tom, as he stood at the window with one hand behind his back. Archie grinned, and stole up to his brother. He put the point of the poker within an inch of Tom's hand. Feeling the unexpected warmth, Tom, turning sharply round, moved his hand and just touched the poker.

A roar as of an enraged lion! Archie dropped the poker on the carpet, and fled in dismay. Tom bore down upon him, and soon had him in his clutches. I understood my elder brother's temper too well not to dread what would happen, so I sprang between them, crying out, "You shan't touch him, Tom. It was a mistake! You shan't!"

Alas! that unlucky *shan't*. It rouses Tom the more, and there follows a furious scene. I cling fast to Tom, regardless of a blow intended for Archie which I receive on my forehead. Archie gets away, and I cry out to him to run out of the room, which he is not slow to do. Frank declines to interfere. Tom rages in pursuit, but Archie has safely gained my bedroom, and locked the door. He declines all

invitations to come out. Presently Tom returns gloomily, exhibiting the burn on his hand, which after all is not so very bad. On my part I have to show a lump on my forehead, which I am told serves me right for interfering. Frank is upbraided on both sides for his share in the matter, and goes out whistling! Oh! it was not like Sunday.

At last the table-maid came to lay the cloth for dinner. We all sat down and ate in silence—all but Archie. He made one attempt to gain admittance, putting in his head at the door with an engaging smile, and, as Tom took no notice beyond a scowl, ventured in. But then Tom flung down his knife and fork, and shouted, "Get out!" and Archie started back to the door. "Am I to get no dinner?" he asked submissively.

"Not where I am," growled Tom in such threatening tones, that Archie lost not a moment in retreating again to his sanctuary.

When the pudding came—cold apple-tart—a great slice had been abstracted. This was how Archie was supporting himself in his outlawry. Frank nearly finished the rest. Neither Tom nor I cared to eat.

After dinner the rain poured down as bad as ever. I think we all fell asleep more or less. I know I was

glad when tea came. Still silence and sulks throughout the family. By this time, however, some of my responsibility was taken off my hands. Tib, returning from afternoon church, took possession of Archie, and, understanding that he had been naughty, sent him to bed. He said he was sorry, and promised not to touch the hot poker again. That was some comfort.

Frank, too, was got out of the way. Whether it was the idleness, or the apple-tart, or his wet shoes, he complained of a bad headache, and retired to bed immediately after tea. I set Tib to him, and she dosed him with Gregory's mixture to her heart's content. It was with difficulty that he escaped a mustard plaster, and I am sure he deserved it.

Tom and I were left alone in the dining-room. I think he wanted to make up with me, but I was not going to have it unless he began by humbling himself. I told him he ought to beg my pardon ; his answer was not polite. So I kept ostentatiously putting my hand up to the blue and swollen bump on my forehead, and enjoyed the luxury of feeling myself ill-used. We sat at different ends of the room, and both read good books—real good books—with great zeal.

At last half-past nine comes, and we may consider

that the long, weary day is at an end. We go upstairs, without saying good night to each other.

I get into bed, but can't sleep. The time passes on ; all in the house becomes quiet ; even the rain outside has stopped at length. But my mind is not at rest. I have a good cry over it.

"It was all Tom's fault," I say to myself. "We should all have behaved well if it hadn't been for him. I shan't forgive that blow in a hurry. A nice kind brother to strike a girl!"

Then I turn round on my other side, and take another view of the subject.

"Perhaps I was too domineering—not patient enough. Boys are very easily made angry. But I shouldn't have let myself lose my temper. Then Tom would have been sorry he hurt me."

Somehow mother's last Sunday talk comes into my head, and I think I hear her grave, sweet voice telling us how to overcome evil with good. And, like a peal of bells, over and over again seems to be chiming in my ears a favourite text of hers : *Let not the sun go down on your wrath.*

"Oh dear!" I sigh, "I have let the sun go down on my wrath. Sunday is over now. No, it isn't."

In despair of going to sleep, I had lit the candle,

and my eyes now fell on the little clock opposite my bed. It was twenty-three minutes to twelve.

I took a sudden resolution. I jumped up, flung on my dressing jacket, and came barefooted into the passage. Just as I reached Tom's room, the door opened, and he appeared in his shirt and trousers.

"Why, Ellie!" he exclaims. "I'm glad you are not asleep. I was just thinking of coming to say to you—look here, Ellie, I'm awfully sorry. I didn't mean to hit you."

"It's all right," I hasten to assure him as he stammers and stops. "I know I was very provoking."

"You weren't. I was an ill-tempered brute."

"Oh no," say I, feebly.

"Yes. And I don't mind owning to you, Ellie—that we—at least I—didn't—well, didn't spend Sunday exactly as mother would have liked."

"No, indeed," I assent.

"But it wasn't your fault," Tom insists.

Like most boys, Tom is not demonstrative, but when after a rather awkward silence, we say good night, he kisses the blue mark on my forehead. I scamper back to bed, get into it with a lighter heart, and our cross Sunday is over.

IX.

THE ONE-EYED TRAPPER:

A TALE OF ADVENTURES AMONG THE REDSKINS.

By J. A. PHILLIPS.

DUR scene opens in the neighbourhood of the Rocky Mountains amid scenery grand and sublime beyond description, boundless prairies, majestic rocks stretching as far as the eye can reach, vast forests all radiant with verdure, through which here and there a peaceful stream flows with rippling murmurs.

On the banks of one of these streams, towards the close of a sultry day, two men were walking slowly, and with cautious glances from side to side. One of these was a youth of handsome and sunburnt features, dressed in a green jerkin with gaiters of buffalo hide. His companion was a man considerably more than six feet high, with sinewy legs and arms of magnificent proportions, and whose furrowed and weather-beaten countenance was rendered almost hideous by the fact of his having only one eye. He was dressed in a hunter's ordinary costume, and in

his hand he carried a rifle of enormous length, known all over the prairies as "hit-eye;" for its owner was celebrated as never missing his mark, and his mark was always the left eye, of which he himself had been deprived in early youth by an Iroquois arrow. The trapper himself was the well-known "Hawk-eye."

Suddenly the dog which followed the two men uttered a low growl. Hawk-eye paused, and making a sign to his young companion, flung himself on the ground, and glided snake-like through the low under-wood. In a minute or two he came in sight of an open space in which a large herd of buffaloes appeared to be feeding.

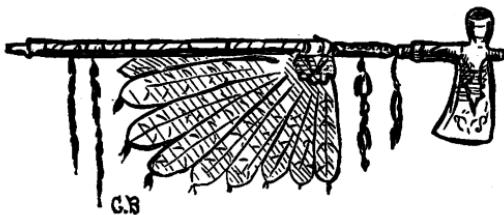
"Ugh!" said he, with a chuckle. "That'll just suit this child. Guess we won't have to chaw our mocassins this time."

Raising his rifle to his shoulder, and without seeming to take aim, he fired, and the nearest buffalo gave a bound, and fell to the ground dead—the bullet having gone through its left eye with deadly accuracy. But before the echoes of the shot had died away, a loud and terrible war-whoop rent the air; the buffaloes rose on their feet, cast off the skins which disguised them, and revealed themselves as a tribe of Indians in full war paint.

“ Varmints, remember Hit-eye ! ” cried the trapper, shouting to his companion to run ; and the two white men plunged into the depth of the forest, pursued by the shouting redskins, the foremost of whom was scarcely a hundred yards in their rear. . . .

[*The Editor not having space to give this tale in full, is obliged to conclude it by a short abstract of the principal events, most of which will be tolerably familiar to the reader.*]

Chase—losing trail—Hawk-eye’s cunning—betrayed by spy—refuge in cave—desperate combat with a grizzly bear—Indians surround cave—smoked out—a rush for life—seized and bound—arrive at wigwams—the chief’s daughter—escape through night—pursuit—prairie fire—reach river—find canoe—Indians on banks—take refuge on island—duel of rifles—arrival of the chief’s daughter—a timely warning—redskins swim across at night—Hawk-eye on the watch—bloody conflict—scalping the slain—strike into woods—Indians on the scent—make final stand—all is lost—arrival of the trappers—death of the chief—return to the settlements—etc., etc., etc.



X.

CHANTICLEER :

AN OLD STORY RETOLD.

BY THE EDITOR.

IN the good old days when "beasts and birds could speak and sing," there lived at a small country farm-house a cock, called Chanticleer, who thought himself a very fine fellow, and could crow louder than any fowl in the neighbourhood. He had seven wives with whom he shared the poultry-yard, but of these his favourite was Dame Partlett, the most beautiful, amiable, sensible, and well-behaved of hens, and in every way fully deserving of the fond love of her husband.

Very early one morning as Chanticleer slumbered on his perch among his seven wives, he began to groan and move in his sleep, till Partlett awoke and asked him what was the matter that he made such a disturbance.

"Don't be displeased at my restlessness," he said.
"I declare! I thought I was in such danger that even

now I can't help shuddering. I dreamed that I was walking in our yard, when a cruel beast rushed upon me, seized me, and was about to put me to death—ugh! the look of him was enough to kill me, and it is no wonder I called out in my sleep."

"Stuff and nonsense!" she replied; for the good dame was a little cross at being roused from her comfortable nap. "You ought to think shame of yourself for being such a coward. Nobody believes in dreams now-a-days; and this only shows that you must be unwell. When people eat too much, of course they dream of horrible beasts and terrible accidents, but they ought to know better than to pay any attention to them. If I were you, I should take some medicine as soon as I got up, for you may depend upon it you will have a fit of some kind or another if you don't. Anyhow, you must not let yourself be frightened about nothing."

"Madam," said he, "you may be very wise, but I don't agree with you, and I have plenty of learned men to back me up. I could tell you of a great many cases, in sacred and profane history, where dreams have come true; and in this case, I am very much mistaken if I am not about to fall into some trouble. But, at all events, I am not going to take any of

your nasty medicine—it's not so bad as that, I hope. Perhaps we had better drop the subject, my dear, and talk of something more agreeable. Indeed, when I look on your lovely face, I forget all my fears, and my mind is filled with none but pleasant thoughts; so let us be happy while we may."

To please his wife, then, Chanticleer took no precautions, but went out walking in the yard that morning as usual. Alas! more than once has a woman's advice led the other sex into trouble. And now a sly fox had come to see what could be seen, and was lying hid among some cabbages, waiting for a chance of a very private conversation with poor Chanticleer, who all unsuspecting stalked up and down the yard, and crowed lustily, paying compliments to the hens as they lay basking in the sun.

Suddenly he caught sight of the fox hiding among the cabbage plants, and started back with a "Cock-a-doodle-doo" of alarm. But the fox walked out and called after him in a polite tone: "My good sir, why are you running away without a word to your friend that has come so far to pay you a visit. I can well understand that you have heard bad accounts of me; and indeed my life has not been altogether what it should have been." Here he cast his eyes to the

ground and sighed. "I was a wild young fellow in my early days, but I assure you, I have seen the error of my ways and am entirely reformed. I now go to church regularly, subscribe to all sorts of benevolent societies, spend my evenings quietly at home studying moral philosophy, and, in fact, am quite a respectable character. Have you not heard that all the principal sheep of the county are subscribing to present me with a testimonial in recognition of my high moral and mental qualities, and the efforts I have made to have an act of parliament passed for the compulsory fattening of lambs?"

"H'm! I can't say that I have," said the cock, gradually backing away from his visitor. "The last time I saw your name in the newspaper, it was in connection with a little matter about some geese."

"I assure you I left the court without the slightest stain on my character," cried Mr Reynard; "and I have just instructed my solicitors to proceed against my accusers for libel."

"Indeed!" was Chanticleer's answer. "What is your business here, then?"

"Business, my dear fellow! I have only dropped in to pay a friendly call, and perhaps hear you sing something from one of the new operas, as everybody

says you have such a splendid voice. I knew your father well—dear old gentleman!—and your charming mother too. Many and many a time have they been at my house, and I must say that I never heard any one sing so well as your poor father. I admired him so much, and I am so fond of good singing, that I hope you will not refuse me the privilege of comparing your voice with what I remember of his. Pray let us have a song at once, and afterwards we will go in-doors and you can introduce me to your good ladies.”

Chanticleer, delighted with this flattery, felt sure that the fox was a gentleman whose character had been very much misrepresented, and willingly agreed to his request. He assumed the attitude which he affected when he sang in public, stretching out his neck and shutting his eyes, and then opened his mouth and began to utter sounds that would have melted the heart of an ogre. But the fox cared no more for music than for morals. The moment that he saw Chanticleer off his guard, he sprang upon him, caught him by the neck, and galloped off with him to his hole in the wood, where he had invited his uncle and aunt and several other foxes of distinction, to breakfast with him that very morning. So Chanti-

cleer's dream came true after all, and of all days in the week, it was a Friday on which this happened.

Imagine the horror and distress with which Dame Partlett and the other hens saw their husband carried off before their very eyes. Never did ladies cry and cackle so loud and piteously! Nor were they long left to mourn alone. The turkeys on the green and the ducks in the pond began to gobble and quack in sympathy; the cows lowed, the pigs grunted, the bees hummed, the dogs barked, and out hurried the people of the farm-house to learn what was the matter. As soon as they saw how Chanticleer was being torn away from the bosom of his family, they all set off in pursuit; men and boys with sticks and stones, dogs, big and small, baying at the heels of the fox; and even old Mother Malkin caught up her kitchen-poker and hobbled along as fast as she could to have a blow at the cunning thief who had already brought two of her chickens to an untimely end.

Away went the fox! On came the pursuers, pressing him so hard and making such a noise, that Mr Reynard began to feel a little bewildered. But he put his best foot foremost and had almost reached the edge of the wood, when poor Chanticleer, who was only now recovering from his surprise, said in

a plaintive tone: "I suppose there is no chance of escape. You are going to eat me, aren't you?"

"Of course I am," replied the fox; but as he opened his mouth to say so, the cock was set free for a moment, and improved the occasion by at once flying up to the top of a high tree, where he perched himself securely, and began to smooth his ruffled plumage.

When the fox saw himself thus outwitted, he put on his very smuggest face, and tried to treat the whole thing as a joke.

"Hallo, Chanticleer, old fellow!" he said, looking up into the tree. "Upon my honour, it was a shame of me to play such a trick and frighten you so. But I didn't mean any harm, and if you will just come down here, I will tell you all about it."

"No, thank you," said the cock. "I shall deserve all that I get, if I allow you to cheat me more than once. You may be a very clever fellow, but you don't persuade me again to sing to you. That's a lesson I have to thank you for—never to shut one's eyes when one ought to keep them open."

"Ah!" said the fox, who never lost a chance of being moral, "it is you who have taught me a lesson—that he cannot expect to be fortunate who opens his mouth when he ought to keep it shut."

"Just so," quoth the cock. "Good-bye, and you needn't trouble to call again."

"By the by, you have just reminded me that I have a very particular engagement," cried the fox, and hurried off without further ceremony, for the pursuers were now close upon him.

So Chanticleer was happily restored to the embraces of his sorrowing family, and Reynard went hungrily home, a sadder and a wiser fox.



XI.

DECLINED WITH THANKS.

HE Editor has to acknowledge the receipt of a number of contributions which he regrets to say are not suitable to the pages of this publication.

The novel, "Albert D'Eresby; or, The Black Hussar," would no doubt be interesting to persons who admire its chief incidents as related in the works of M. Dumas and Mr Harrison Ainsworth; but it is much too long, and contains serious historical errors. Cardinal Richelieu did not live in the time of Henry VIII., nor was Lady Jane Grey crowned in Buckingham Palace.

The "Essay on Acrobats" shows great learning and research, but it passes in a strangely abrupt fashion into a description of the Acropolis at Athens. *Surely the author must have turned over two pages of the cyclopaedia at once.*

A poetical drama has been received, which is, in fact, the story of Punch and Judy turned into a tragedy, after the Greek model, with a chorus and mythical personages. It is quite unsuitable; but the scene where Punchius strangles Nemesis in his own noose, shows promise.

A short epic poem, also, on the "Progress of Civilisation in Europe," must be declined, and the author is recommended to attend to his spelling.

The Editor's desk is quite crowded with short tales which are apparently fragments of the personal experience of the authors, treated in the manner of various popular writers. One or two specimens are subjoined. The first is interesting from the artless and simple style and the realistic effect of the narrative.

MY SCOOOLBOY FRENDs.

I am going to write a tale about my scool life at _____. When I first went there were only 6 boys in the form. One of there names was Jim, and another Tom, and these are the fellows I am going to write about. We were nerely always at the botom of the form, and when we did get up it was only by chance. One day when we did not know our lessons the master cained us, and we had 9 on the back each. I should have got the cain many more times if it had not been for chance, for I never used to look at my Cesar, and I never used to get put on first, so I always used to get off. One day at tea Tom took some butter of Jim's, and so they said they would have a fight afterwards; so after tea we began a fight, and Jim gave Tom a black eye, and so Tom shut up, and Jim was liked by all the boys for that, but afterwards the head master saw Tom with his black eye, and he asked him how he got it, but he would not tell, but

Jim was found out and got toko. The next day Jim went out with his governer, and he had a lot of things given him, and when he got home he gave Tom some, but when Tom went out one day with his father, and he got some things to eat, he would not give him any. The master was acustomed to goe round the house to see if all was right. But on Sunday he did not generaly goe. But it happened one night he went round, and he thought he herd a window open. So he looked up, and saw the head of a boy looking out, so he said, how is it you are not in bed? He answered, I was looking to see if I thought it would be a fine day to-morow. Stay in an hour, said the master, and go to bed; but he thought that something was rong, so he staid under the window among the bushes, and after he had been there for about an hour, he herd a noise above, then he saw 4 boys getting down by a rope, and this was Tom and three other fellows, but Jim wouldn't go with them. Then he saw them go into the town, and throw stones into the windows. He saw them get up again. In the morning they were called to the master's study and cained, and threatened to be expelled next time. This is the end of my story of Jim and Tom.

Here is another tale, written in a more sentimental and pretentious style :

AUGUSTUS ; OR, THE FATAL ERROR.

It was the evening of the 31st of April when our story opens.

Three persons were walking in a garden on the Cotswold hills. Through the trees could be seen a large rambling old mansion, which evidently had been built two centuries ago, but was a very handsome one of Gothic architecture. The yellow sun was setting over the purple waves of the sea.

There was a tall aristocratic man, about the middle age ; a slight fair woman was walking by his side, and a young and lovely girl was on his other side. A tall handsome boy of about fifteen completed the party.

The lady was saying, "I hope you will find the school as pleasant as I have heard it spoken of ; but ask your father about it."

The boy turned to his father, and asked him if he thought Dr Brown a nice man.

Mr De Montgomery answered, "I think Dr Brown a very nice man."

"But," said Mrs De Montgomery, "I must go and see about the hamper you are to take with you to-morrow."

And Mrs De Montgomery walked away.

When she had gone, Mr De Montgomery said to the boy (whose name was Augustus) :

“I hope you will always behave well; such as speaking the truth, and touching your hat to the masters.”

Then his father put his hand in his pocket and drew out three guineas, and gave them to the boy.

Next morning he was up at three o'clock, and was starting for London. He was much excited.

We must now pass over a part of his school-life, till we see him in a tobacconist's shop, which was strictly forbidden. It was the first time he had broken the rules.

Suddenly he saw the head-master, who entered the shop and asked him what he was doing there; and Augustus had nothing to say.

Dr Brown told him to go home, and wait in his study; and the end of it was he was expelled publicly.

The next author is probably less acquainted with the modern masters of juvenile fiction than with such works as “Sandford and Merton,” and “Evenings at Home.” The moral is excellent, and we trust there is no truth in the report that the author is one of the most idle and troublesome boys in his form.

WORK AND PLAY.

Once there were two boys named Harry and George, who were at school together.

"George," said Harry, "come and have a game of cricket, as we have a holiday this afternoon."

"No, Harry, I cannot," said George; "I have my lessons to finish, but will come in an hour or two."

"Bother the lessons," said Harry; "I wish there were no such things. I wonder how you can like lessons. You are always engaged with them. You might just as well come and have a game, and study afterwards."

"Harry," said George, "you should never procrastinate. You do not know what may happen to hinder you from learning your lessons to-night."

"Well," said Harry, "you may do as you like, but I am off for a game of cricket. I don't see how it can hurt. Good-bye; I wish you joy over your lessons."

Off went Harry to cricket and George to lessons. Next morning Harry did not know his lessons, and had to write them out. "George," said he, "I wish I had done as you did, and I should not have this additional task imposed on me. Next time I shall learn first and play afterwards."

Some correspondents have sent in a large number of riddles, charades, and other puzzles, which have been already too frequently printed in the pages of our contemporaries. One or two historical and critical papers are also refused, being evi-

dently nothing but old school exercises. Want of space and weakness in the matter of grammar, must be the excuse for declining several other tales and essays of an interesting and original character. And in conclusion the Editor ventures to express a hope that his labours may give satisfaction to the indulgent readers, whom he begs to assure that this is their last opportunity of appreciating him in such a capacity, as he has found the editing of a magazine to be anything but *A Holiday Task*.



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